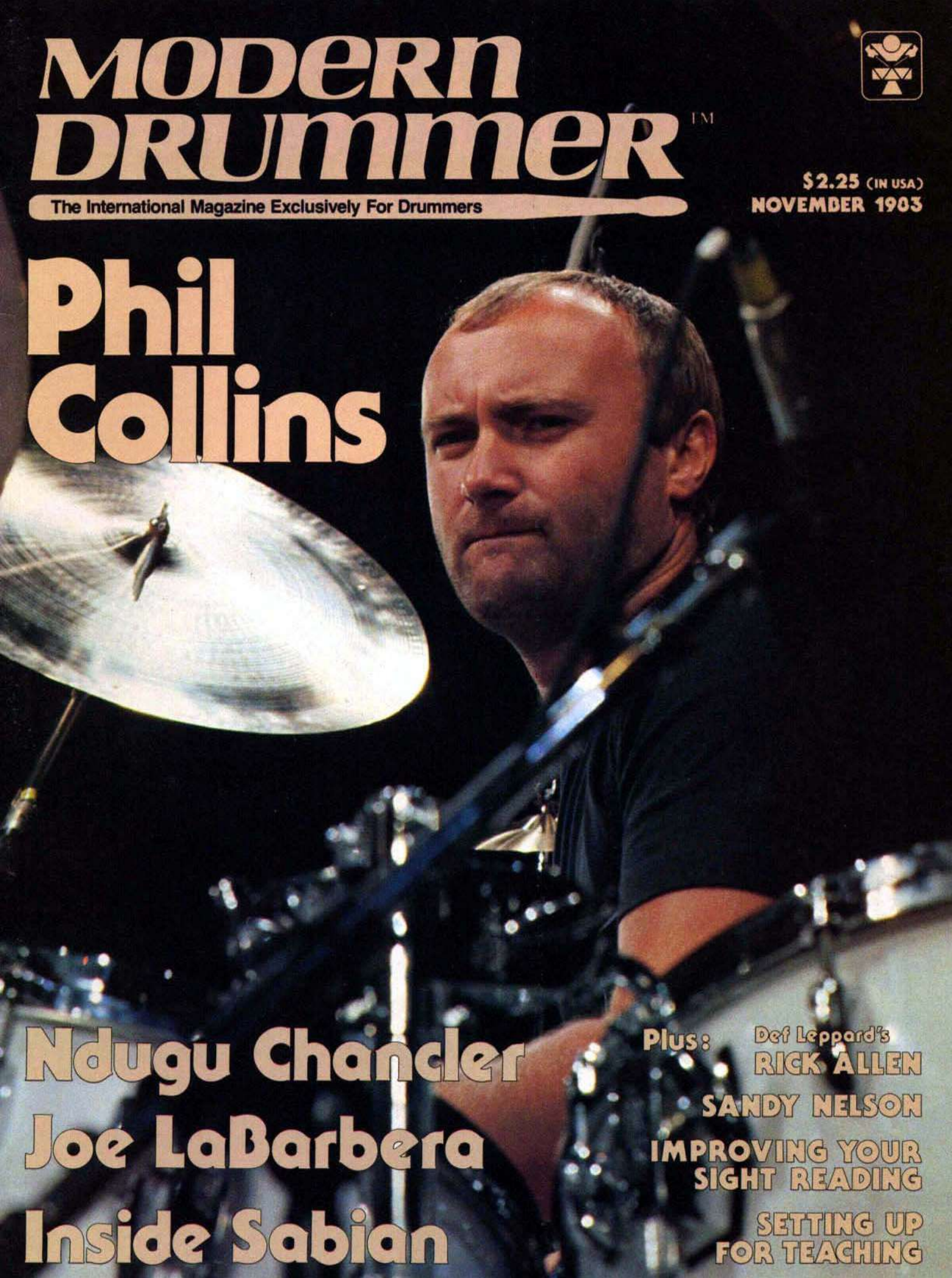
MODERN DRUMMER
The International Magazine Exclusively For Drummers
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NOVEMBER 1903
Phil Collins
Ndugu Chancler
Joe LaBarbera
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CONTENTS

Cover Photo by Lewis Lee

FEATURES

PHIL COLLINS
Don't let Phil Collins' recent success as a singer fool you—he wants everyone to know that he's still as interested as ever in being a drummer. Here, he discusses the percussive side of his life, including his involvement with Genesis, his work with Robert Plant, and his dual drumming with Chester Thompson.
by Susan Alexander 8

NDUGU LEON CHANCLER
As a drummer, Ndugu has worked with such artists and groups as Herbie Hancock, Michael Jackson, and Weather Report. As a producer, his credits include Santana, Flora Purim, and George Duke. As articulate as he is talented, Ndugu describes his life, his drumming, and his musical philosophies.
by Robin Tolleson 14

INSIDE SABIAN
by Chip Stern 18

JOE LABARBERA
Joe LaBarbera is a versatile drummer whose career spans a broad spectrum of experience ranging from performing with pianist Bill Evans to most recently appearing with Tony Bennett. In this interview, LaBarbera discusses his early life as a member of a musical family and the influences that have made him a "lyrical" drummer. This accomplished musician also describes the personal standards that have allowed him to maintain a stable life-style while pursuing a career as a jazz musician.
by Katherine Alleyne & Judith Sullivan McIntosh 24

Photo by Lisa Tanner

Photo by Bruce Talamon

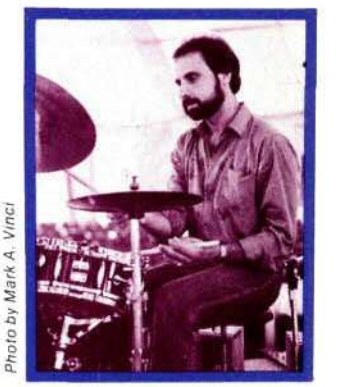
Photo by Mark A. Vinci

COLUMNS

EDUCATION

ROCK PERSPECTIVES
A Beat Study
by David Garibaldi 30

CONCEPTS
Drumming and Discouragement
by Roy Burns 82

DRUM SOLOIST
Mel Lewis: "Tiptoe"
by Chuck Kerrigan 84

TEACHER'S FORUM
Establishing a Teaching Practice
by James E. Murphy 86

JAZZ DRUMMERS WORKSHOP
Improving Your Sight-Reading Skills
by Randy Martin 98

CLUB SCENE
The Ambition Blues
by Rick Van Horn 100

STRICTLY TECHNIQUE
Double Paradiddles Around the Drumset
by Stanley Ellis 102

LISTENER'S GUIDE
by Paul T. Riddle 110

EQUIPMENT

PRODUCT CLOSE-UP
Percussive Potpourri
by Bob Saydlowski, Jr. 28

JUST DRUMS 122

PROFILES

PORTRAITS
Sandy Nelson
by Robyn Flans 32

SHOW AND STUDIO
Alan Schwartzberg
by Bobby Bank 42

UP AND COMING
Def Leppard's Rick Allen
by Philip Bashe 56

ON THE MOVE
Thunder Child 60

DRIVER'S SEAT
Rufus "Speedy" Jones
by Robert Barnelle 76

NEWS

UPDATE
by Robyn Flans 118

INDUSTRY HAPPENINGS 120

DEPARTMENTS

EDITOR'S OVERVIEW 2
READER'S PLATFORM 4
ASK A PRO 6
STAYING IN TUNE
by Hal Blaine 108
DRUM MARKET 112
IT'S QUESTIONABLE 116

EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

On The Road To Success

One question which seems to arise repeatedly from the younger segment of our readership is, "Can I really expect to make a living from a professional drumming career?" It's obviously a valid question which comes most often from young adults at that critical stage in their lives when important career decisions must be made.

To answer the question, I think it's important for one to first make a careful evaluation of his or her own natural abilities and aspirations. "Do I really believe I have what it takes?" is the question you must ask yourself, and it's imperative that it be answered honestly. Along with the confidence you should have regarding your own ability as a player, you should also be picking up positive indications from other musicians, peers, music teachers, family and friends.

However, there's more to it than positive reaction to natural talent. Preparation for a music career takes hard work and effort, though how you go about it is a personal decision. College, intensive private study, solid playing experience in a wide range of musical situations, or any combination of the above are all acceptable methods. Natural talent is one thing; molding talent into attributes which add up to a complete musician is somewhat of a different matter.

Versatility is also key. Evidence of this has surfaced time and time again within the pages of *MD.* An understanding of all styles of music enables you to handle any musical situation, and thereby increases your chances of success. Versatility also means the ability to teach, write, and perform competently on other percussion instruments.

Determination and persistence are two essential ingredients which contribute to success in any endeavor, and in the field of music, they're twice as important. There are very simply too many ups and downs, frustrations, and disappointments in the music business to venture into a career without an excess of determination and persistence. Sure, it's been said many times before, but it *always* bears repeating.

Interestingly, and in an effort to be as up front as possible, even if you excel in all of the areas mentioned above, there's still no guarantee of success. Unfortunately, that's the nature of the business and the cold reality of it all, which is something you *should* be aware of. Luck, breaks, knowing the right people, being in the right place at the right time, doing a good job when it really matters, and a host of other factors all play a role in your success. On the positive side, assuming you have the talent and work hard at it, there's certainly no reason to believe that your chances of success are any less than anyone else's.

Amidst all the uncertainties, one thing is certain, and that is, there's probably no greater pleasure in life than to be paid for work you love to do. Though it's not an easy goal to achieve, it's certainly worth going after.

RS

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MODERN DRUMMER *Magazine (ISSN 0194-4533) is published monthly by Modern Drummer Publications, Inc., 1000 Clifton Avenue, Clifton, N.J. 07013. Second Class Postage paid at Clifton, N.J. 07015 and at additional mailing offices.*

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: *$21.95 per year, $39.95, two years. Single copies $2.25.* **MANUSCRIPTS:** *Modern Drummer welcomes manuscripts, however, cannot assume responsibility for them. Manuscripts must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.* **CHANGE OF ADDRESS:** *Allow at least six weeks for a change. Please provide both old and new address.* **MUSIC DEALERS:** *Modern Drummer is available for resale at bulk rates. Direct correspondence to Modern Drummer Publications, Inc., 1000 Clifton Avenue, Clifton, N.J. 07013. (201) 778-1700.* **POSTMASTER:** *Send Address Changes to Modern Drummer, 1000 Clifton Avenue, Clifton, N.J. 07013.*

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READER'S PLATFORM

AIRTO & MAXWELL

Although I'm a saxman, I picked up your August issue for the Billy Maxwell feature. We used to jam together at a club called The Esquire. Also, I'm surprised Robyn Flans didn't ask Airto about playing pig (squeezing a piglet) on an album by Hermeto Pascal. Seems like it would've tied in nicely with the "sausage" story. Wonder Wart-Hog lives!

Larry Hollis
Oklahoma City, OK

REGGAE DRUMMERS

I just have to thank and congratulate Robert Santelli and MD for the enlightening and amusing interviews of the Reggae drummers. Such color and character these musicians portray!

Sal D'Amato
San Francisco, CA

QUESTIONING "IT'S QUESTIONABLE"

In the May MD, Mr. Covell from the Creative Drum Shop suggested that W.R. use a stationary router to cut a new bearing edge on old wooden drums. I strongly disagree. One slip of a router could turn a collector's item into a large planter pot.

One very safe method will give the amateur hands-on experience. Use a medium coarse, flat-edge wood file and even the edge around the shell. Switch to a fine coarse, flat-edge file and smooth it even more. Finish with a piece of fine grit sandpaper (600 grit) and lightly wax the edge. Do one edge of each drum at a time and don't rush to complete the job.

I'm sure this method is more time consuming, but it's safer than using power tools.

Bob Hanlon
Philadelphia, PA

MD ABROAD

Hello and best wishes from the middle point of an 11-week European tour. We've played concerts in England, France, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Norway. We're constantly on the move, but to keep up on what's happening, I can pick up a copy of MD in any of several cities and drum shops. That's really fantastic. Keep up the good work.

Mario Grillo
Italy

READER'S POLL

After having just viewed your 1983 reader's poll, the results quickly reveal that it isn't much more than a popularity contest.

Although Neil Peart is one of the best rock drummers we have seen, a true heavyweight, I don't believe he is yet to be placed above the likes of Billy Cobham, Buddy Rich, Bill Bruford, and Airto (not to disregard others by lack of mention). Whether or not Peart deserves to be elected, once one gives a drummer a vote for the honor of MD's Hall of Fame, shouldn't one leave other categories open for other drummers (four categories!)? Buddy Rich is also an example of this. Although Mr. Rich deserves big band drummer hands down, the category for jazz should have been left for Cobham, DeJohnette, or Louie Bellson. Also—Terry Bozzio for Up and Coming drummer? Most drummers would agree that playing on albums and live with Frank Zappa signifies that you've made it. Bozzio played on Zappa's album *Zoot Allures* in 1976.

Although in Big Band, Studio, Latin/Brazilian, and Classical the poll hit the bull's-eye, it still leaves much to be desired. *Modern Drummer* is the magazine of the American percussionist. Therefore, its reader's poll reflects the American percussionist's opinion. Come on drummers, show your TRUE taste!

Rick LoPresti
Elmwood Park, IL

OFF THE RECORD

Off The Record by Simon Goodwin was fantastic! Having to play tambourine and drumset for Pure Prairie League's "Amie," this article gave me great insight. Not only does the extra instrument add more color and give me more versatility, but more importantly, the audience loves it!

Dave Racine
Somerset, MA

MYRON GROMBACHER

I am writing to tell you how much I enjoyed Robyn Flans' interview with Myron Grombacher. I was especially pleased to read about Myron's Ludwig drum "Cage" set designed by Jeff Chonis. It's interesting to read about such a different approach to drum mounting. Keep up the good work!

Ron Reed
Sheridan, IL

MIKE CLARK

I was so glad to have a full-length interview on Mike Clark. I've been a fan of his since the Herbie Hancock *Thrust* album. I've found out that a friend/teacher of mine knew Mike. He gave me Mike's number and I called him. When he answered the phone, he scared me to death. His voice was about three octaves below middle C. Mike invited me out to see him play a bebop gig. Not only did he play great, he was also a great and informative person. I'll never forget his expression in his three-octave-below-middle-C voice: "Come out and we'll hang."

Jimmy Griego
Sacramento, CA

STEVE GADD

The Gadd article was very nice because it was different; more towards life with people, managers, producers, and artists that Steve has and does work with. Steve is not my favorite drummer, and I know he's the greatest of all. I've decided to be different myself; to create and not imitate; to feel proud and be out of the crowd. Even if I'm not famous, I can look back when I get very old and say I did my share in the art of drumming; not *by following,* but by leading.

I'm very sorry for those imitators of Gadd. They're not creating. They're doing something that Gadd has already done. So let's stop the Gaddmania.

Albert Julian Garcia
Santurce, P.R.

CARR CORRECTION

In my interview, there was a goof-up in the description of my equipment, caused either by the way I described it, or by the way the writer perceived it. At any rate, the cymbal setup that was described is not my personal setup. That was rental equipment that was used on the last album, and we were using it again because we were very pleased with the results. But I actually use and endorse Paiste cymbals. I use them live, and I will be using them on future albums. My cymbal setup as of now is two 20" *Rude* crashes, a 22" *Rude* ride, a 22" 2002 China, two sets of 14" *Rude* heavy hi-hats, and 16" and 18" 2002 medium crashes.

Eric Carr
New York, NY

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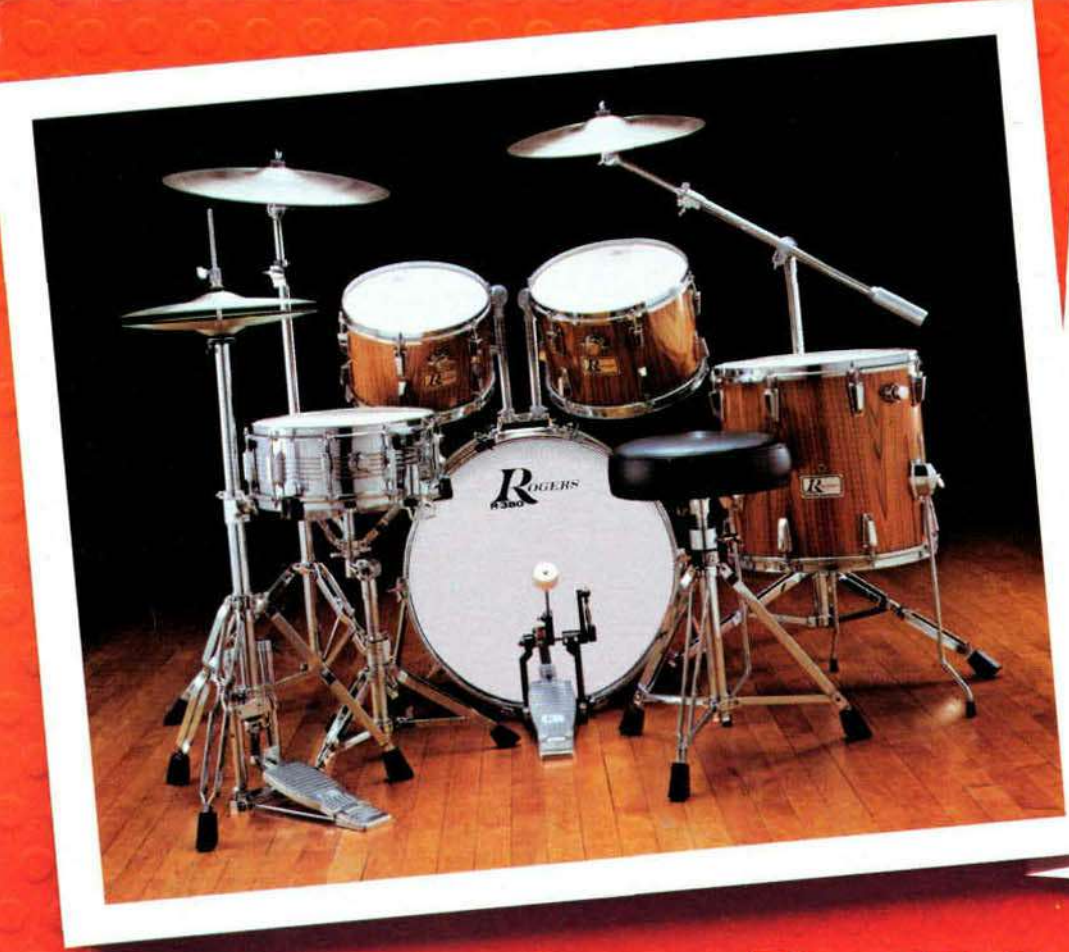

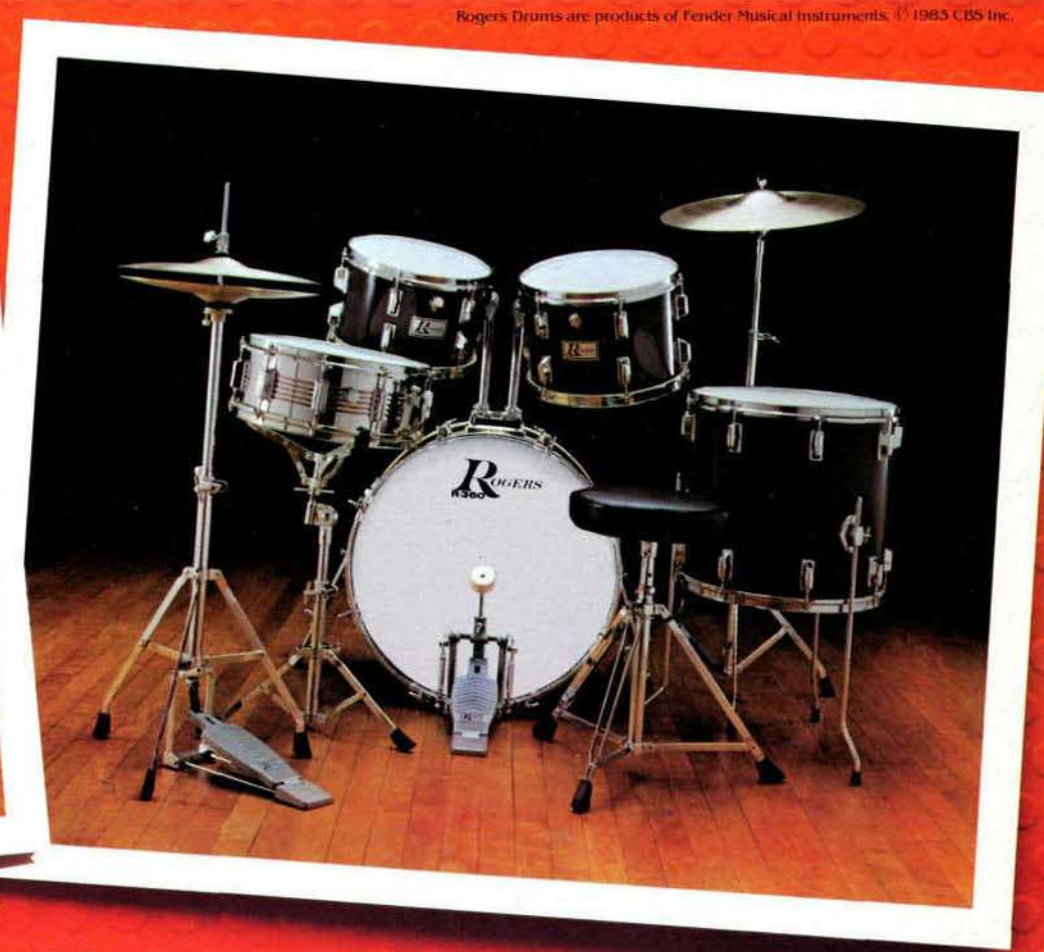

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ASK A PRO

ROGER HAWKINS

Q. What were the make of drums and sizes that you used recording with Aretha Franklin on "Chain of Fools" and "Respect" down at Mussle Shoals?

Kyle Cochran
New Paltz, NY

A. On "Ain't Never Loved a Man"—that was the earliest one, the first thing that Atlantic did with Aretha—that was a Ludwig kit with a 5 1/2 x 14 Super Sensitive *chrome snare drum. The rest of those sessions were done in New York: "Respect," "This Is The House That Jack Built," "Chain of Fools" and all those other ones. That was still with the Ludwig* Super Sensitive *snare drum that I bought in 1962 in Orlando, Flordia. The rest of the drums were the studio kit. As I remember, I only took my snare drum and hi-hat cymbals to those dates. I think the bass drum was an old, scratched-up, red Rogers bass drum full of newspaper. I played it iust like it was. I tuned it and put new heads on the toms, that I think were Ludwig. The session that we cut "Respect" on was my favorite.*

LES DE MERLE

Q. Who did you study with when you were coming up? Who were your influences?

Steven Karatzas
Macminville, OR

A. I really only had two teachers. The first was Bob Livingstone in New York. I started leading a group and playing professionally at a young age. That's how I met Alan Dawson, my other teacher. I was playing opposite him in Boston when I was 18 and was knocked out by him. Between my sets at Paul's Mall and his sets with George Benson at the Jazz Workshop, we'd shed together, get tips and write things out, A lot of my studying was with piano players on theory and harmony. Most of my drum influence I got from seeing and hearing players around New York in the clubs. I listened to Buddy and Louie and the great cats with hands—Joe Morello, Charli Persip, Mel Lewis, Jimmy Cobb and Lex Humphries.

BILL BRUFORD

Photo by Marko Pesikan

Q. Could you explain in more detail what you mean when you speak about textural drumming? Thanks.

Robert Lincoln
Greenfield, IN

A. A texture is something woven; the impression resulting from the way you combine or interrelate the parts of a whole. As a piece of cloth has tactile and visual *texture, so a piece of music has* aural *texture.*

Now, by choosing two or more notes to be played simultaneously, the drummer can be said to play chords of indefinite pitch. The way these chords are deployed and their relationship to the chords being provided by the rest of the orchestra (group) will determine the musical texture; abrasive, silky or brittle. For example, we are all familiar by now with the chord sounded when snare, bass drum and closed hi-hat are struck simultaneously. Certainly a good chord, maybe even one of the best, but there are surely others that might sound fresher!

A collective inertia over the last couple of decades has allowed many rock/jazz drummers to assume that their textural thinking has been done for them, and their responsibility ends with providing the correct sticking for the correct paradiddle at the correct dynamic. Not so! So, try thinking in terms of sound/timbre combinations and indefinite pitched chords—not only within your own percussion setup, but particularly as related to the other sounds being generated—and I'm sure you'll come up with some nice textures!

NEIL PEART

Q. What is that strange piece of hardware located directly below your concert toms and hi-hat?

Jeff Koehneke
Cincinnati, OH

A. Ha-ha! The unit I think you're referring to is a fan, *of the "squirrel-cage" type. Its function, of course, is to blow on my hands and keep them* dry, *while the rest of me swelters under all those lights! That and having Larry take the varnish off the ends of my sticks, does wonders for my grip and stops the embarrassing phenomenon of "unidentified flying drumsticks." I recommend this piece of hardware very highly.*

Q. Can you elaborate a little on the size and weights of your cymbals? I find them very expressive and powerful.

Mark Thompson
Kenosha, WI

A. There is not much to tell about my cymbals. They are all Zildjians, with the exception of one Chinese cymbal. The crash cymbals are all medium weights and the only unusual thing about my hi-hat cymbals is their size (13"). I've never been one for hand selecting my cymbals. I usually find the right size and weight will give me the sound I want. My personal favorites for expressiveness are the 16" crash and the Chinese one, but I'm also very fond of my hi-hat, ride cymbal, splash cymbals, 18" crash, 20" crash, Pang and 20" China type. It's not that I'm greedy, I just like too many things.

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CYMBALS SOUNDS GONGS

Phil Collins "I'm a drummer first"

by Susan Alexander

The success of drummer/singer Phil Collins has been phenomenal. He has played drums with Genesis for 12 years, and for the past seven years, he has also been the lead singer of that hugely successful band.

In 1981, Collins released his first solo album, *Face Value,* which immediately zoomed to the top of the charts. The year 1982 saw the release of his second top-selling album, *Hello, I Must Be Going,* and his first solo tour of the States.

His touring band included Chester Thompson on drums, Daryl Stuermer on guitar, Peter Robinson on keyboards, Mo Foster on bass, and The Phoenix Horns: Louis Satterfield, Don Myrick, Michael Harris and Rhamlee Michael Davis from Earth, Wind & Fire. Besides singing and playing drums, Phil also plays keyboards in this band.

Collins had no problem in choosing Chester Thompson for the job, as Thompson, along with guitarist Stuermer, plays in the Genesis touring band. The three core members of Genesis are Collins, Mike Rutherford and Tony Banks.

Because he is the focal point in both his and the Genesis live shows, Collins can only play drums for a quarter of the time in concert. In the studio, however, he is the sole drummer.

He has recently branched out even further, becoming a producer. In that capacity he has worked with John Martyn, Anni-Frid (Frida) Lyngstad from Abba, and Adam Ant. He also produces his own solo albums and is co-producer, with his fellow band members, of Genesis. The production offers have been pouring in, but with his commitments to Genesis and his various other projects, it's hard to accommodate everyone.

As if this weren't enough, Phil has plenty of session work to fill in any spare time that he might have. It's a very busy schedule, but Phil seems to thrive on it. When I first visited him on his American tour around Christmas time, he was looking ahead to the next year and a half, which had already been planned out for him.

"Originally, L.A. was the last gig of the tour," he said. "But because the album is doing very well and it and the single keep going up, and the band is together and free, we're going to come back out on the road. I'm going on holiday for two weeks because this tour has taken a lot out of me. I'm not the kind of person who ever felt I needed a holiday, but I know I must. I'm losing my voice all the time and I'm nervy. I've only ever had two holidays, and that started last year and the year before last. Up until then, I never took holidays and I'm quite happy as a result of it. But, I quite like a couple of weeks in the sun looking healthy.

"So, I'm going to come out for another three weeks to play places that I haven't played yet. Otherwise, I won't get a chance to do it until mid-'84, because next year, starting on March 1, Genesis is doing an album. Then, when we finish, we're going to come out on the road in November, when the record comes out. We'll have Christmas off and then come out again for another month or two. Really, I'm saying that I already know what I'm doing up until March '84. Of course, if we don't hit it off in the rehearsal room, then we'll all be free from March 2nd. So, there's always that, but I don't think that'll happen.

"I want to produce an album for the horns. I will be touring with Robert Plant this summer, and Frida wants me to do her second album. I'll maybe produce an album with Pete Townshend, which I'd love to do, but it's very, very vague because I haven't spoken to the man himself about it. So far, I've played on everything I've produced. It's the frustration thing of not really wanting to go through somebody else. If it was a band, it would be a little bit different."

Despite what sounds like a grueling schedule, Collins says that he prefers to be busy. "Better that way than saying nobody wants you to do anything. There are lots of things I could do. But, when the band is together, it takes a long time. I've chosen to use this time for my own album; for my own tour."

Having several projects going on at the same time is nothing new for Collins. At the same time Phil was playing with Genesis in the early '70s, he was listening to such groups as the Mahavishnu Orchestra. That led him to a rather unusual situation: While still fulfilling his commitments to Genesis, he joined an experimental jazz/funk band called Brand X.

"I joined Brand X because I was getting a bit stifled just doing Genesis. I found it very hard to get the band to play the kind of music that I was listening to. There's also a side of me that likes the Buddy Rich Big Band, which I was really trying to play. And with Genesis, if you listen to 'Foxtrot,' there's an element of that in my playing, with pushing accents and stuff. I basically joined Brand X because I was getting a bit frustrated with not being able to get that side of me out. Brand X started off more of a funk band than a jazz band. We were doing stuff like The Average White Band; not as commercial, but that kind of groove.

"I wasn't writing a lot for Genesis.

Photo by Susan Alexander

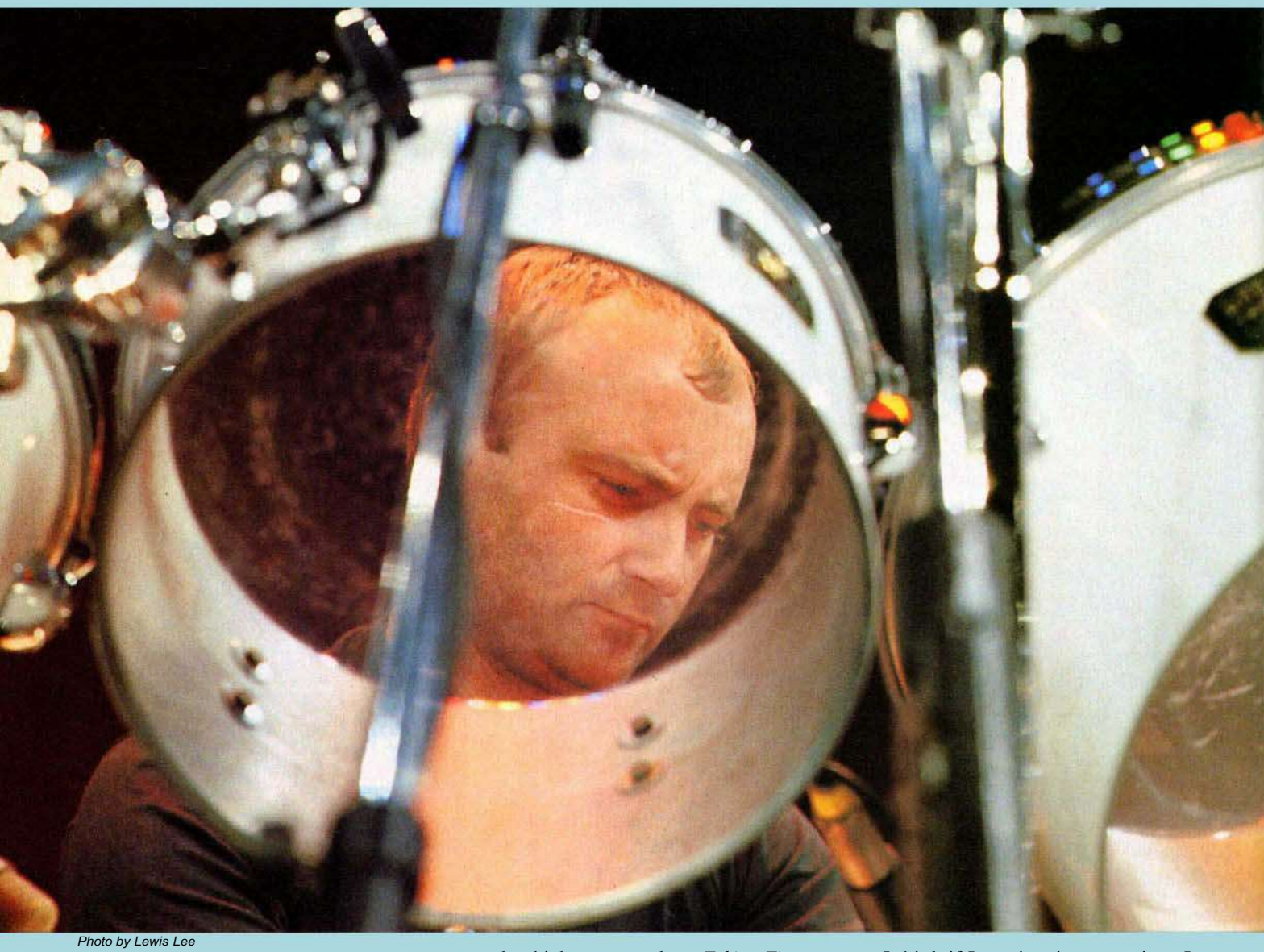


Photo by Lewis Lee

I was doing more arranging and playing. My strength was seeing other people's songs in different lights. So, it was a chemistry thing. Although I wasn't a writer, I was an important part. Being in both bands was very appetizing. Eventually, Brand X started to get more interested in doing some fusion stuff. It was a free group. That was in stark contrast to Genesis' rigidity."

It was through working with Brand X that Phil met other musicians who invited him to play on their sessions. "I became very, very busy. The initial reaction was that you can't be in two groups, because no one does that. I said, 'Well, I don't know who made that rule up, but I've got X amount of time; I'll divide it X amount of ways.'

"For instance, when Genesis was doing *The Lamb,* Eno was upstairs and he met Peter [Gabriel]. Peter wanted to feed his vocals through some of Eno's synthesizers. So, he came down. As payment for that, I was sent upstairs to play on Eno's record, which was a track on *Taking Tiger Mountain By Strategy.* We hit it off well, so when he did *Another Green World,* he rang me and Percy [Jones from Brand X] up and I did all the drums on that."

From there, Phil moved on to sessions with John Cale, Rod Argent and two concept albums with Robin Lumley. "I did lots of sessions at Trident. Dave Hentschel, who was engineering Elton John, was doing sessions. He'd ring me up. I knew lots of people. I'd been around a lot more than the other guys in the band and I did everything I was asked to do. I never got bored with Genesis that way because Genesis was just something different that I did, and it still is the same way. I mean, I've got more of a vested interest in Genesis now because I get more of me out in Genesis. A third of the music is me. Also, I'm very responsible for the way the band is on stage because I'm the one who's giving it to the audience. So, it's a little bit different now than the way it was. Even so, I think if I was just in one project, I would get a little frustrated. Especially now, since I've got my own thing going as well."

But what about Brand X? "Brand X is sleeping. Everyone lives in different parts of the world and I don't think we'll get back together. Brand X was getting a little bit too organized. Genesis was getting freer and Brand X was getting tighter. We ended up meeting in the middle. There was no real reason for me to do both."

Phil also became frustrated with Brand X's inability to play as an ensemble. "When the early Mahavishnu would hook into something and they'd go away, they'd all come back—BANG!—into something that would blow you away. Brand X used to sort of hook into something and go away and never come back. So, it was a bit frustrating."

One thing it did prove to him, however, was that he could do more than one project. Collins now feels that he can go into as many activities as he

wants. "People are really surprised about the amount of time that I must have to do all these projects. But, really, I don't find it a strain. I'm not on my last legs or anything. It's just attitude, I guess, whether you want to get in there and make as much money as you can so you don't have to do anything else, or whether you just keep going because you love what you're doing. I'm more in the last category."

In 1980, Phil played on Peter Gabriel's third album, which proved to be a new experience. "On that album, he didn't want to use cymbals and I said, 'Okay.' I know Peter very, very well and I said, 'I know you're a man of principle, Peter, but there are times when cymbals are a necessity. You've just got to have a couple.' He said, 'No, no, no. I don't want any cymbals. I don't want any metal on the album at all.' So, I thought, 'Well, okay. I'll go along with it; it's your record.' I still think that maybe there are a couple of instances where it wouldn't have made much difference, but as a principle, I went along with it.

"Most of the things that sound like synthesized drums are just drums that were treated. 'Intruder' was just my black kit in the live room at the Townhouse in London with compressors and noise gates. I wish I could actually put into words the way it happened, because it was quite amazing. It was the first time I ever met Hugh Padgham. Steve Lillywhite was the producer, Hugh was engineer, and Peter and myself were literally just mucking about. I was playing around my drums in this live room and Hugh was setting everything up. I went up and hit some and, because of the compression, it elongated the decay. It clips the top; it lengthens it. So, if you hit a snare drum, especially in a live room with a lot of ambience, then you get a gate to cut off. What I was doing was playing 'dssshh, dssshh, dsssh, dssshh, dsssh, dssshh,' which we called the 'face hugger.' So, it was mucking about with sounds like that, making them sound like synthesized sounds, but in fact they're not. They were all played like that. They were all played at the same time as the sound, as opposed to not having that sound to play with.

"I did the same thing with Frida's album. There's a song that's been played on the radio a lot called 'I Know There's Something Going On,' and that is a similar way of doing it. You get the sound and you play with it. After there's a gap, you play the next beat and that defines what your part is.

"Now, I'm more interested in doing that, although not in every instance. It's like what I did with Robert Plant's album. You get all that heavy Zeppelin compression. If you're playing with it, you're bouncing off a sound and then you're playing with it. So you don't do a fast tom-tom fill. You play it and then, if you've got a pair of ears, you'll hear what to do next.

"I've thought a lot about who is responsible for that sound. I don't think it was Steve Lillywhite because I was there and I know who was controlling the board. It wasn't Peter because Peter was just sitting there enjoying it. He was the one who put his finger on the button and said, 'Phil, I like that. Can you do that for ten minutes?' So, I played it to a drum machine so it stayed steady for ten minutes.

"It was really me and Hugh, because he built the studio almost. He's one of the Townhouse first engineers. It's an SSL board; each module has got its own compressor and noise gate built into it. He knew the board backwards and he knew what could be done. Then again, you could take that into the same studio with another drummer and it wouldn't sound the same.

"It was definitely a melting pot of everybody's ideas. If ever I start to sound egotistical, I always think, 'Stop it, boy,' because I'm not at all. But, there were some things which I think I had a lot to do with, and when *In the Air* came out, people said, 'Oh, it's the old Gabriel sound.' But I said, 'It's me on the Gabriel record; my drums. It's my ideas,' you know. It's basically my sound and I'm very, very proud."

But what did Phil do with his hi-hat foot while playing? "Well, I had the hi-hat pedal there, but no cymbals on it. I did that just so I could at least feel at home. We had a tom-tom where the cymbal would have been and there was one track, which he didn't use, where it was a tambourine instead of cymbal. It sounded really good. It was just putting something else there instead of the cymbal.

"It was very interesting. I felt that it was definitely a surge forward for me. You sort of cruise for six months. Suddenly, something happens and you go into overdrive for a couple of months and then you cruise for another six. Then suddenly, you go into overdrive again; be it a personal relationship or something else. That happened to me with that album. But, it was very interesting. I felt that it was a very brave album for him and I feel a part of it because I helped it.

"Hugh is a wonderful engineer. He's a bass player and he's into drums. He's just got a general overall feel for something new. He's a fresh face. Let's face it, there are so many different sounds out there, it's good to get a few people who are just coming up that have something different to do with the same old instruments."

Concerning his own instruments, Collins states that he is a "meat and potatoes man" when it comes to new drum shapes. "A drumkit should look like a drumkit. The Staccato and the *Octoban* things, they're tools to use, but I mean, the Staccato drumkits look like a pair of shorts. That's an area of drum technology that leaves me cold."

He has, however, been using drum machines. "When they first started and all you had was a bossa nova, a waltz or a rhumba, I thought, 'That sounds terrible.' But, there are so many things that can be done now. I use them at home for writing. I've got four or five different types.

"At the beginning of the Roland drum machine period, when we were in Japan with Genesis, we got the first three off the production line; the little square-box ones. So, everybody's writing suddenly got very spacious,

"THE NEW BANDS THAT ARE AROUND NOW MAY SOUND VERY SIMILAR TO EACH OTHER, BUT AT LEAST THEY SOUND BETTER THAN THE BANDS WHO SOUNDED SIMILAR TO EACH OTHER THREE OR FOUR YEARS AGO."

Photo by Paul Natkin/Photo Reserve

because when you're writing on piano, you tend to fill in all the gaps, but with the rhythm going, you leave a few holes. Peter Gabriel also got one and I guess there are a couple of tracks on his third album where he uses it.

"I've got an English machine called The Movement, which is like the English Linn. I've got the original model, but six months ago, they promised me the new one in a week. I'm 'top of the list,' supposedly. It's like a typewriter with a screen. It's for a person who's not very good with manuals, which I'm not. It makes it very easy. 'First, you do this.' Right. 'Then you do that.'

"You call it a name. You set how many beats to the bar you want and it makes it simpler. It just comes up on a screen like a computer. They've remodeled that and they're waiting for the parts from Japan. I've made my own little chips, so I've got my 'In the Air'/'Intruder' sound on my own chips, which will be in this new machine later on. Now that, to me, will mean that I'll be able to take my eight-track stuff at home ever further. On both of my albums, all the backing tracks have been done on eight track at home. 'In the Air' was just the drum machine and keyboards that I recorded on my eight track, and then copied onto 24 track. That was done with the original Roland drum machine; the old square box. 'In the Air' was written on that, as well as 'This Must Be Love' and 'Hand in Hand.'

"I have that on stage and also the new Roland. Rather than get one of the newer drum machines to do it, all those sounds are so different now, I still use the original one for the tunes that were written on it.

"Obviously, having my own chips at home means that I can actually get my drum sound at home and it will be me. It won't be someone who sounds like me. The advance in that kind of area has been good. I think drummers shouldn't really be threatened by it. I think drum machines are as good as the people who program them. I don't think that drummers will ever be redundant because you'll need a good drummer to be able to program the thing to make it sound like a good drummer. There's no way you can get around it.

"I think a tune like 'Thru These Walls' is so slow, that if you didn't have something like the drum machine to play with, it would wander too much. So, I use Chester and the drum machine on stage. For a song like 'If Leaving Me Is Easy,' which is slow, there's a slightly more constant drum machine part on tape when I played the piano part. Some of what I've done is just write the drum machine part, which is probably fuller than any part that I would ever want to use. But, it means you can take it out and suddenly you've got this amazingly spacious groove!"

As far as his acoustic kit, Collins has switched brands a few times. I asked him why. "I don't want to bad-mouth Premier because I've still got two of their kits and I still play them. One is the black concert-tom kit which I used to use on the road with Genesis and I used on all the albums; even my new album. I basically went with Premier in the first place because they were the only company that was interested in offering me a deal about seven or eight years ago. They were British and it was easier to get parts for. There was a man called Eddie Haynes who then left and went to work for Zildjian, then left Zildjian and is now with Sabian, which is why I now use Zildjian and Sabian as well as Paiste sometimes. I've got about 150 different cymbals for all occasions.

"By comparison to Premier, Pearl are heavier drums. They've got that hard sound which is like 'In the Air.' Pearl certainly has been good on the service side of it. And, in the end, that's what it comes down to because a drum sounds like a drum when all is said and done.

"Recently, Gretsch got in touch with me and asked if I would be one of their endorsees. While I have been very happy with Pearl, I'm going to change to Gretsch because my first proper kit was Gretsch and they've always had a lovely sound. So, now I'll be playing Gretsch, although I'll keep the Pearl kits and they'll still be used on different albums, depending on what things I do.

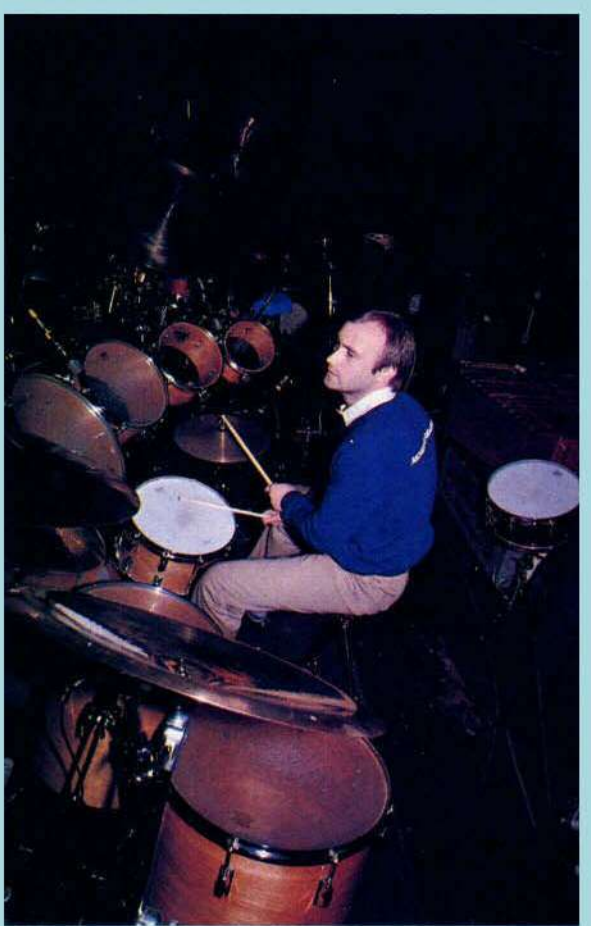


Photo by Paul Jonason

"What I used on my own tour and on the Genesis tour were 8", 10", 12", 14", 16" and 18" tom-toms. What I'll be using on the Plant tour will hopefully be the same sizes, but Gretsch drums.

"The skins are Remo *Ambassadors.* I've actually just started using the rough-coat *Emperor* on the snare drum because I was going through a skin a night; pitting it, not breaking it. I'd be playing it on a wood drum. So, I guess maybe I'm trying to get more out of it. I'd feel the skin and it was just like the Andes. There were pits all over it. I couldn't believe it was the skins. It must have been me just putting too much into it. So, on this tour, I started using the heavier one which has been fine.

"I'm using a 20" bass drum. I've always used a 20" bass. I've got a Premier kit with a 22" bass drum, but usually it's just the 20". The first proper drum kit that I had also had a 20" bass drum. Not being a big bloke, that seemed to be a normal size. I sit low.

"I kind of collect cymbals and drums. I don't go around antique shops or anything, but I've still got the first Gretsch kit I had. I've got this eight, double-headed tom-tom Premier kit with a 22" bass drum. I've still got the black kit which is what I call the 'In the Air' concert-tom kit. I always wanted a brand new Gretsch kit and I bought one a few years ago. They're nine ply, I think. They're quite heavy drums, actually. I've also got an 18" bass drum for jazz stuff.

"I use single-headed drums a lot of the time when we're playing. You see, with Genesis, you're playing big concerts and double-headed drums don't cut. I've got a lot of confidence in our sound engineer; we've known him for years. But, I feel that if I'm playing a 20,000 seater, then it's as much down to me to fill that as it is the sound engineer. The chances are that he'll be thinking about the guitar when I'm doing something. So, I'd rather have the sound coming from what I'm doing. A couple of tours ago, I had a period where I was using double-headed drums. They sounded great to me and they probably sounded good on tape, but to the audience, they just didn't project across the front of the stage.

"I have the same opinion of Chester's drums. It's up to him what he

continued on page 48

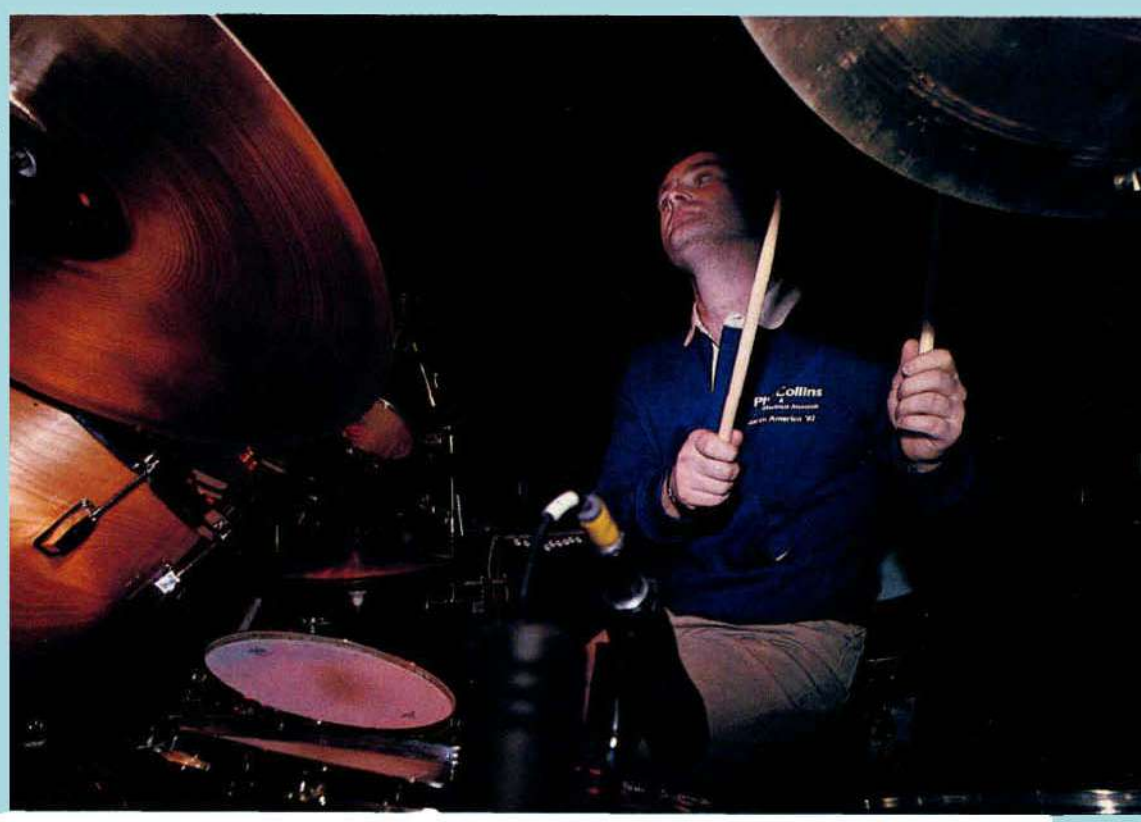


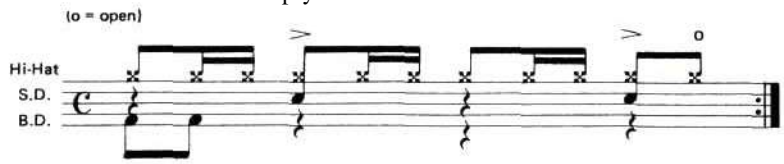
Photo by Paul Jonason

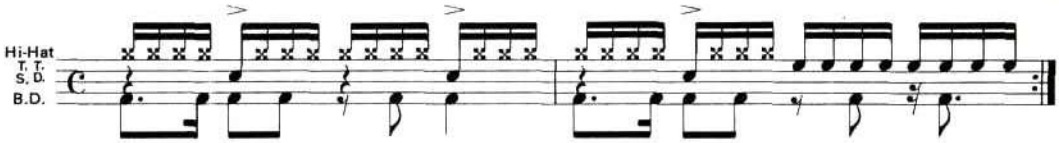
"I THINK DRUM MACHINES ARE AS GOOD AS THE PEOPLE WHO PROGRAM THEM."

Phil Collins: Up-Close

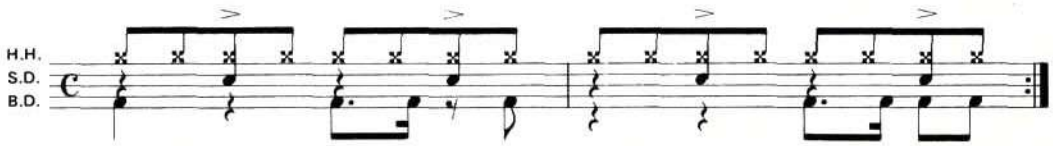
The drumming of Phil Collins offers a wealth of opportunities for analysis. We've chosen to focus on some of Phil's work on the *Genesis/ABACAB* and *Hello, I Must Be Going* albums, both of which clearly capture his unique drumming style.

Several points of interest stand out in the spot transcriptions below, namely, Phil's extremely tasteful approach to rock drumming, and the meticulous precision of his playing. Simplicity, taste, precision and inventiveness come together in the playing style of Phil Collins, one of the most prolific rock drummers on the current music scene.

Genesis/ABACAB: "No Reply At All

Genesis/ABACAB: "Another Record"



Frida Lyngstad: "I Know There's Something Going On"

Hello, I Must Be Going: "I Cannot Believe It's True"

Hello, I Must Be Going: "Do You Know, Do You Care"

Hello, I Must Be Going: "It Don't Matter To Me"

PAISTE
PAISTE

Ndugu Leon Chancler

by Robin Tolleson

Ndugu. The name in Swahili means "Earth Brother." In rumming, Ndugu Leon Chancler's aura is that of a powerhouse, with his head in the stars and his feet planted firmly in the groove—the pulse of the earth.

Listeners in the '70s may have heard Ndugu bouncefrom Herbie Hancock to George Duke to Santana, with stints in Jean-Luc Ponty's band and Weather Report also increasing his visibility. He also briefly led a band of his own, The Chocolate Jam Company.

In the '80s, Ndugu has become a top, high-salary session player in Los Angeles, performing on recent releases by Michael Jackson, Lionel Ritchie and Kenny Rogers. He'sformed Ranee Productions with Reggie Andrews, and the two are producing r&b acts. They wrote the Dazz Band's hit, "Let It Whip." Ndugu's production credits through the years include Flora Purim, Bill Summers, George Duke, and Santana LPs.

In 1983, Ndugu is doing some touring with a band called Stars Of The '80s; keyboardist Patrice Rushen, Alphonso Johnson on bass, and reedman Ernie Watts. It is a return to jazz and progressive music rootsfor these players, and at their Berkeley Jazz Festival appearance, Ndugu threatened to steal the show.

At times he seems rocket-propelled, rising high offhis throne to backhand a crash. He plays standing up. He dances outfrom his kit to high-step at a set of timbales. He leans back completely out ofsight before straining up to ignite a song-ending explosion. And before the song is over, he has put sticks emphatically through two drumheads.

RT: You are one of the more visually entertaining drummers I've seen. Have you worked at putting on a good show, or is it natural?

NC: It started off being natural, but in the later years I've become conscious of it. After the modes of music I was playing changed, it was very important to become more visual. When a person pays money to go to a concert, it's not exciting if they just hear what they want to hear. People go to a concert to get inside what you are, where you're coming from, and get a feeling of you as a person, and whatever they see, they lock that into their minds and take that home with them. It's important, since drums is an instrument that can never be in front, for them to at least get a feeling of what I'm really about. With the music changing to be more show-oriented, everyone on the stage has to realize that they are on a stage, and function in that light. Inside of it being a concert there should still be some show involved.

RT: How does a drummer go about working on the visual?

NC: I think a lot of what I've acquired has come from just practicing the craft itself. When you take tennis lessons, the first thing the instructor tells you is to get in front of the mirror and watch your motion so you are aware of what you're doing. When practicing in my earlier years, I used to sit in front of a mirror, and I just got a mirror image of what I was doing. After gaining a little response from that, I started taking it further and further. Some of the other drummers were only doing things like that because of the reach of their drums. One thing that I had to do live was change my setup so people could see me. I gained consciousness of that working with Santana. When I first started working with Santana I had a lot of things in front of me, and it was pointed out to me that people are coming to *see* the band. They can hear you from anywhere in the house, but when you get good seats you want to be a part of what's going on onstage. So I cleared out the front of my whole drumkit. I raised my cymbals up higher and took out all the tom-toms in front of me.

RT: The way your cymbals are set up forces you to be visual.

NC: Yeah. When you get into speed and comfortability, the closer everything is to you the more it's at your reach—you don't have to go anywhere to get it. But when you start talking about power, along with seeing a show, then I think it's very important to utilize the distance of the area that I can reach all the way around the whole drum system. It's very important for the rhythm section players to utilize the space that they take up on the stage in whatever way—spinning around, jumping around or whatever. I think my most visual moments are when I'm out front at the timbales. I've got a little dance that I do, and I play and spin around. I do all kinds of tricks just to give people an idea that, yes, I'm a drummer, but I'm also aware that I'm on a stage and I come to get you off.

RT: You had amazing extension of your arms on some of the crash-roll combinations you were doing.

NC: Well, I've been developing this setup since about '75. Once you become aware of what you're trying to do, and mentally you get ready for it, then it's just a matter of developing it. I know where everything is, so I don't have to look. It's just a matter of knowing what to play where, to get the visual effect along with complementing the music.

RT: Could we go back to your very beginnings?

NC: Alright. I was born in Shreveport, Louisiana, July 1, 1952. I didn't really start playing drums until I moved to Los Angeles, even though that was one of my main interests from when I was six years old. I used to make little drums out of oatmeal boxes and coffee cans. I never even really had a pair of drumsticks; I just created my own little thing. It wasn't until I was 12 or 13 that I got an opportunity to play real drums. Once I got into it, I kind of OD'd on it. I was going to school for mathematics, but the music bug hit me and I really got into it. I moved to L.A. in 1960. I went to junior high school where I started my musical career, and moved on to high school where I changed my major to music education, so my emphasis then was totally on music. I was in the band and orchestra and taking music classes too—theory and harmony and all that. I went to Locke High School, which was one of the key black music schools in the city in the years to follow. I and maybe five to seven other people were the ones responsible for setting up the musical base in the school because we were the first to go through and become successful. The band itself was one of the best bands in the city and the state, and won all the competitions. We marched in the Rose Parade and so forth. At that point I started branching off into other areas of drums. I really devoted a lot of time to percussion, mallet instruments, and timpani. I never really took any private lessons, but I got a lot of private influence during that time. One thing that kept me from getting private lessons was that I couldn't afford it. I'm the youngest out of seven, and there really wasn't any money left over for a profession that a family didn't know that much about. So it was kind of trial and error. It worked for me. It's not something that I encourage, but it's worked for me. And I was fortunate to go through it like that.

I attended college for two years at Cal. State, Domingus Hills, with a major in Music Ed., and then I dropped out. I really got too busy to absorb the school thing. Plus, it didn't seem at the time to be very functional for what I was trying to do musically. I can see where it would be valuable now, but at the time, I didn't see it that way.

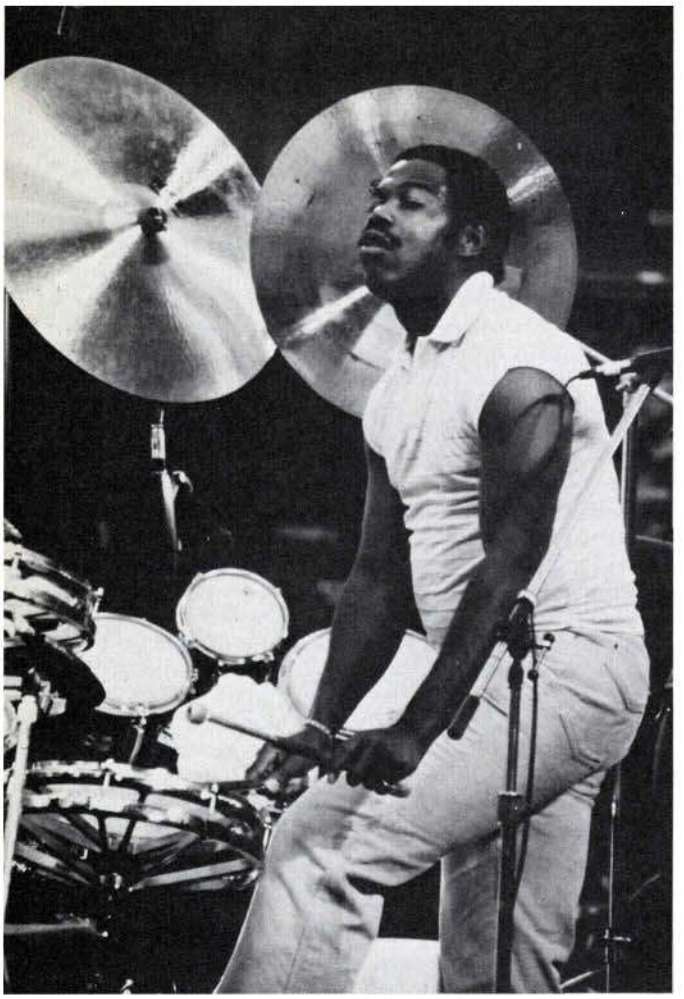
RT: You had a rudimental background then, from school?

NC: Oh definitely. Being that I couldn't afford private lessons I had to get it any way I could. I learned from people like Raymond Pounds, who took private lessons from one of the better teachers in the area, and there was another drummer who didn't go to the school but took lessons from Ed Thigpen. Also, I became very close to Stix Hooper. All my technical knowledge came basically from those three areas of people, along with the band directors at school. I had the same band directors from Gompers Junior High to Locke High School.

My first exposure to really great names in jazz was in 1968. The band director at the school took me to the Pacific Jazz Festival in Costa Mesa. Don Ellis had a big band with two drummers. Buddy Rich was there. The Crusaders were there. Jack DeJohnette was

Photo by Bruce Talamon

Photo by Greg Toland



"I THINK A DRUMMER'S SUCCESS AND NOTABILITY ARE BASED ON SENSITIVITY AS A *MUSICIAN*- NOT AS A DRUMMER. I'M AN ORCHESTRATOR. THE DRUMS ARE JUST THE INSTRUMENT I USE TO ORCHESTRATE ..."

there with Charles Lloyd. And that was really a treat for me. I ended up backstage talking with all the guys and getting autographs. I think that was my greatest inspiration of knowing what was in store for me later on, and what I had to do—how much work I had to do. I saw a crossbreed of very talented and great drummers playing different music at the same time. That let me know that if I was going to be successful in this, I really had to get everything together. So I'd like to say I had private lessons without paying. That's what it boils down to. Stix Hooper put me in some books. The other guys showed me things that their teachers taught them.

RT: What was it, when you were six years old, that made you start making those drums and banging away?

NC: It's really strange. I've seen pictures of me from three and four on up, and all my life there's been like a show-biz air around my personality. When I was a kid I'd get a broom and act like I was playing guitar, or act like I had a microphone. It wasn't something that I was conscious of. I think I felt some form of music at all times. When I was six my family bought me a guitar, and I got blisters on my fingers because I wasn't aware you were supposed to use a pick. I didn't get anything out of it, but something during that time kept driving me to rhythm. When I was washing dishes I'd pick up two steak knives and start beating them—drive everybody crazy. It wasn't something I was conscious of until I was denied it. In the 6th grade they had a little elementary school band, and I told the music instructor I wanted to play the drums. She said they already had a drummer and wanted me to play trombone, so I said, "Well, I won't be in the band." That was that, because I think at that point, I was really starting to feel that it was something I wanted to do, despite the fact that I never had the opportunity. So it was just a matter of time. I ended up having to prove a point to my family too, because like I said earlier, the whole area of entertainment and music was very foreign to my family. That made me work that much harder.

RT: You hear a lot of talk in music about how success is being in the right place at the right time, and who you know. How much of it do you think is that, and how much is persistence and hard work?

NC: I think the persistence and the working hard is what guarantees your longevity, and being able to hang in there once you get a break. But there is so much luck involved in becoming successful that it *is* being in the right place at the right time. As human beings we all have talent. We're all not always aware, when it counts, of what our true talents are. The ones who ended up being successful are the ones who are a little aware of their talent—maybe not totally but to some degree aware of their talent—and develop it to a point that when an opportunity comes for them to show that talent, they can utilize that space.

I think I was lucky that various people were attracted to the area that I was in. Herbie Hancock came to the school and performed, and I had a chance to perform with him. Gerald Wilson took an interest in the school. Nelson Riddle had a little workshop once a week that I was involved with. So I was involved with enough of a crossbreed of influence which inspired me that much more to get it all together. Then it was a matter of getting the break. I think I jumped on the bandwagon during a very lean period, when they were searching for new talent. The music was making a transition. We were coming out of the heavy bebop, straight-ahead jazz thing and into the fusion. I think at that time they were looking.

I think the most important thing is your attitude. There were, and still are, a lot of musicians who have more technique than I have, or more talent. But inside the talent is a way of not only knowing how to manipulate it through the ranks to get the maximum out of it, but there is also an attitude that you must project to make people feel you as a person. I very much wanted to get along with everybody, and wanted to add as much as I could to whatever situation. From the beginning, I wanted to be a workhorse, and I had to work harder at drumming than some of my peers. There was a guy I grew up with who was much more advanced than I was at the time. Right now you can't give him away. Much more talent than I had at the time, but the thing that was missing was the knowledge of how to utilize that in the marketplace of the music and not just in his own home or practice room. He had the talent but it didn't work for him, overall.

RT: When did you play with Miles Davis?

NC: I played with Miles when I was a little kid. I was 19, and I wasn't ready to be with Miles. That's the only gig I regret. When I went with Miles I had just gotten fired from Freddie Hubbard's band. Miles called me, and the last person on this earth that I thought I'd ever play with was Miles Davis. I was in shock. Part of my performance on the gig was based on that. I was in shock. Some nights I played good and some nights I didn't, because I watched Miles and got into Miles, and forgot that I was with Miles and needed to be playing to help Miles out. On the gigs that I played good on, I played my behind off. But on some of the other gigs nothing was happening. So I was inconsistent. One of the keys to being successful is consistency.

RT: Did you do any recording with Miles?

NC: Just some bootleg records that came out in Europe, but no real recordings.

RT: You were with Miles at 19, and Freddie Hubbard before that. Who was the first "name" that you played with?

NC: I played with Willie Bobo while I was in high school. Right after graduation from high school I played with Gerald Wilson. That was for the summer, weekends and local stuff. Then I started going out with Hugh Masekela on the weekends during college. I had gotten called to play a concert with Herbie Hancock during that time at the Forum, with Iron Butterfly. I did that, and Herbie asked me to join his band, but I wanted to stay in school because it was my first year. Herbie asked me to play on his record, and we did the *Mwandishi* album with two drummers. Then Herbie and I kind of gained a rapport back and forth. I started working locally at Shelly's Manne Hole with whatever bands came to town—Eddie Harris, Joe Henderson, Thelonius Monk, and then Freddie Hubbard. I lasted with Freddie Hubbard, I think, three weeks, and I had moved to New York for that summer to do that. So I came back, and Miles called me about a month later. I gave up everything. I was still enrolled in college and never went. That was it. After that the snowball effect started really happening.

RT: People talk a lot about Miles as a teacher.

NC: Miles Davis is one of the greatest teachers of music ever to play any instrument, but he doesn't teach like a teacher. Miles teaches you concepts—ways of thinking—and he teaches you how to get inside yourself. He teaches you to explore yourself before you explore somebody else. Check *yourselfout.* And he opens you up to appreciate what everybody else is doing. A lot of musicians get hung up in what they're doing and forget that just as you play an instrument, there are 150 other people around the corner playing the same thing, trying to get where you're trying to get. So you can't get hung up in the vacuum of what you're doing. You've got to be really receptive to what's going on totally. Not only in music, but in society in general. All of that Miles taught me. At that point it wasn't a question of technique, it was a question of direction. I had gotten most of my playing influence from Stix Hooper, Bruno Carr, and Herbie Hancock, in terms of the feeling I have as a player, but in terms of channeling the direction, all of that is Miles Davis. Where I am now is a product of things that Miles taught me how to think about. I learned a lot from him. I'm still learning from him. One thing I'm learning from him now is that you're never too old to change. I think the most important thing in music is to remain contemporary. If you get hung up in what you have done, you will never do anything. And all that is what Miles is teaching.

RT: It's not easy to play drums standing up, but you seem to enjoy it.

NC: I'm really into the history of the instrument; the evolution of drumming in America, drumming in Africa and other countries. I think before you can really play and appreciate an instrument, you've got to know where it came from. Then you've got to know about all the people who were responsible for its evolution. In terms of standing up, what I learned in my readings was that most of the great drummers were dancers. They tap danced; did vaudeville. Buddy Rich is a great example.

RT: Steve Gadd too.

NC: So understanding that gave me another insight into the whole show concept. Stand up and dance. Without the beat there is no dance anyway, so the beat itself is a dance. I just acquired that in my mode of thinking and went for it. And I practice it. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't, but I think the way my setup is aids me in doing the show things that I do. My cymbals are set up kind of high and I sit kind of low, so that means I can get up.

RT: Is the bass drum hard to play standing up?

NC: The bass drum is the easiest part, because most of the time you're playing heavy with the ball of your foot anyway, and in watching drummers like Tony [Williams], when they sit they're not really sitting. They're bouncing, and everything is moving. It's like a machine. So all you're doing is pivoting one limb off the other, because you're never just sitting. You're bouncing and pivoting, and while these two feet are up you might be pivoting on your behind. While the two feet are down you might be up or you might be reaching for the cymbals or whatever. To get the power you're pivoting. When you walk you pick up one foot and move the other one around. So that can be incorporated in playing drums. It's just a matter of balance. It's like a ballet dancer spinning around on one toe. So the whole dance is really part of the music. You play music to get happy, and when you get happy you might dance. It's supposed to make you move.

RT: And there's the fact that it is showy.

NC: Yeah, yeah. Like I told Michael Walden, I've got my drums set up like that to separate me from the other guys, because I can't outplay 'em. I do what I do so people will remember me. It's not about a great battle. Everything I do is just a result of things that I've had to do over the years to gain a space on the musical horizon. So far it's worked very well for me, so I can't fight it.

RT: Another showy thing you did was lean back real far before coming up to crash the cymbals.

NC: Like a board. It's like, "Where is the sound coming from? I can't see him." And that's the whole idea. Let's face it, it don't

continued on page 64

Photo by Bruce Talamon

inside SABIAN

by Chip Stern
Photos by Gary Carnivale

The road to Canada is lined with lonely stretches of white birch and pine as far as the eye can see, punctuated every few miles by lakes, streams, rivers and towns so small as to be invisible. Traffic on Interstate 95 seems to be restricted to our rented car and an occasional state trooper. It occurs to us that, if it weren't for this highway, Northern Maine would be little changed from the days of the Pilgrims.

We arrive at the Canadian border and submit to the polite grilling of a bespectacled bureaucrat. "Anything to declare?" The official seems satisfied that we are indeed journalists for Modern Drummer *and introduces us to a portly Mountie absentmindedly puffing on a pipe. "These gentlemen are going to be visiting Meductic, New Brunswick for a couple of days," our official explains.*

"Oh, going up to the Zildjian factory, " he remarks matter-of-factly.

"No," our official points out by way of correction, "to the SABIAN factory."

"Same difference," the older man shrugs without a trace of irony.

Of course our friend, being neither a drummer nor a retailer, would have little reason to suspect that a great deal of water had gone under the bridge since 1968 when the Azco plant began producing Zildjian and Zilco cymbals on a spot overlooking the St. John's River in Meductic; that Robert Zildjian and his elder brother, Armand, had had a falling out; that the American side of the family business—in operation since 1929—had come apart since the death of their father, Avedis Armand Zildjian, in 1979; and that the brothers had gone their separate ways, each producing fine musical instruments using the famous Zildjian family process. It is, as they say, a very long story, and probably of little interest to a Mountie.

But for drummers and cymbal-buyers the world over, the story of the Zildjian family is endlessly fascinating, an accumulation of myth, lore and one of the great, sustained marketing campaigns of all time, which wouldn't have made much impact if drummers weren't sold on the cymbals' musical quality.

However, drummers on the street were never really aware of the background. All they knew was that there were Avedis Zildjian cymbals made in America, that there were K. Zildjian cymbals made in Turkey (which were or weren't authentic Zildjians depending on who you talked to), and that both had distinctive musical qualities, although they couldn't tell you why.

While it's unlikely anyone will ever make a "real K" in the old-world manner again, there is a renewed interest among drummers and cymbal-makers in attaining that quality of sound. The ferocious competition for the cymbal-buyer's dollars, pounds, drachmas, marks, and yen between both sides of the Zildjian family (as well as the Paistes, Toscos, Cambers and Wuhans of the world), has pushed cymbal-making to a new zenith, so that today's drummers have a better choice of cymbals now than at any point in the past 20 years.

In our visit to the Sabian factory in Meductic, New Brunswick, we discovered that by combining the best elements of the Zildjian's American and Turkish family traditions of machine-hammered (AA) *and hand-hammered* (HH) *cymbal craftsmanship, Sabian is helping to lead the way in the evolution of these mystical, mysterious instruments, setting new standards of quality, consistency and individuality.*

But who are the Sabians, and how did we come to the point where drummers once again can choose from two distinctly different sounding lines of cymbals cast from the Zildjian family's uniquely processed alloy of copper and tin? What might recommend the use of machine-hammered or hand-hammered cymbals in your setup? How are they made? What quality does the family's secret process impart to their alloy? And why are there now two separate branches of the Zildjian family making cymbals in North America?

To answer these and other questions, we must first go back to the old world, at the very juncture of Europe, Asia and Africa, to the city of Constantinople and to a felicitous discovery by an Armenian craftsman named Avedis . . .

GENEALOGY

Cymbals are surely among history's oldest instruments—archeologists have found cymbals in the tombs of ancient Egyptians—but modern Turkish cymbals as we know them date—according to the Zildjian family history—from around the early 1600s when a metal worker named Avedis discovered a method for treating an alloy of copper and tin in the casting process to produce instruments of remarkable power, sonority and strength.

Robert Zildjian breaks into an infectious giggle when I query him on this secret formula. "You want I should play that for you on a violin?" he quips.

"There is no secret formula," he explains with a hint of exasperation. "It's bronze: what they call *B20* in the metal industry, which means it's composed of 80% copper and 20% tin, and you'll find that a lot of copper has trace elements of silver in it as well. There are other alloys of bronze used for making cymbals such as *B8's* (which contain 92% copper and 8% tin), B12's (where the proportions are 88% copper and 12% tin) and so on.

"B20 bronze is extremely brittle, especially with all that tin in it, but the larger proportion of tin is what contributes to the brilliance and sonority of the sound. Now if you tried to put together a *B20* alloy just any which way, then heated it and rolled it, it would break up like a dry cracker. What the original Avedis discovered was a process for treating this alloy of copper and tin to make a casting that could then be heated and rolled repeatedly without breaking because the structure of this alloy was so malleable and ductile. The quality and power of these cast cymbals were unique, and local craftsmen dubbed him 'Zildjian,' which in Turkish means 'cymbal-smith.'

"So it's not the formula, but the process for treating the metals and making the casting that's been handed down through the generations, traditionally to the eldest male member of the family."

During the early 19th century, the family process had been passed down to one

Kerope Zilcan, Robert Zildjian, Billy Zildjian, and Gabe Zilcan.

Haroutian Zildjian, and among his children we know of two sons: Avedis, the elder, and Kerope, the younger. Upon Haroutian's death, Avedis took over the business, which he ran with great vigor until his death in 1865.

Avedis had two sons, Haroutian and Aram Zildjian, neither of whom were of age at the time of his death, so the process and command of the family business passed to Kerope, Avedis' younger brother. Kerope had 12 children in all: two sons and ten daughters; Diran Zildjian was the eldest son, and Levon Zildjian the younger; among the daughters, Victoria was the eldest, and of her other sisters we need only be concerned with Akabi Zildjian and Filor Zildjian.

It was around the dawn of the 20th century when an obscure series of events precipitated the fissure in the family business that found the descendants of one brother, Avedis Zildjian, setting up an American enterprise, and the descendants of the other brother, Kerope, carrying on in Istanbul. This period of time was marked by intense political unheaval throughout Europe and, among other reasons, this is why precise dates and facts concerning the Zildjian family succession'are unclear. Records of birthdates and deaths, when kept at all, were stored in churches and Bibles, which in many cases were put to the torch. So while precise information isn't available, it is clear that from 1900-1930 the Zildjian family process passed into the hands of several men and—wonder of wonders—at least one woman, Victoria Zildjian (putting to rest the old family yarn, "We never tell the women").

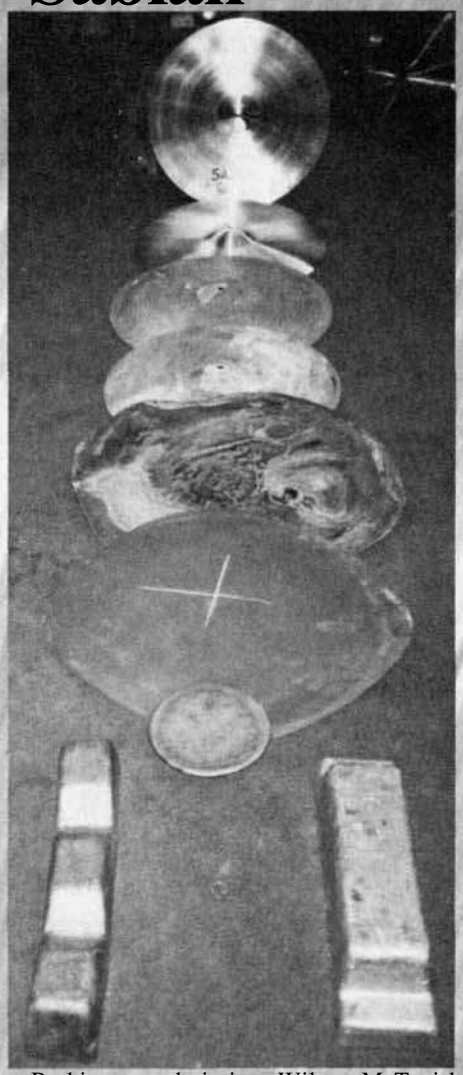
Kerope's sons, Diran and Levon (and a forgotten cousin), are believed to have taken charge of the foundry in Istanbul for short periods of time, though it is unclear if this was while their father was alive or after his death (believed to have been around 1909). Robert Zildjian believes that in 1909 the family process passed to Aram, as the eldest male member (his older brother, Haroutian, being already well-established in legal and political circles, took a pass on the family business), and that Diran and Levon were probably not of age. However, as neither brother is believed to have lived into the 1920s, it is probable that they were both already dead at this time or that they shared the family formula.

In any event, Aram Zildjian was, in Robert's words, "a playboy, a screw-off and a rabble-rouser. He tried to blow up the Sultan. Eventually they found out he was involved, and he was forced to leave Turkey."

So who kept the foundry going in Con-

continued on page 88

The Making of a Sabian



By his own admission, Wilson McTavish (Billy) Zildjian has a reputation for being a real fussbudget. Born September 25, 1957, Robert Zildjian's eldest son spent a number of years as a rock 'n'roll drummer, so he has some first-hand knowledge of what makes for a great cymbal and what can frustrate a working drummer in the search for a personal sound.

Now at 26, he's wearing many hats in the family business. As Sabian's Vice-President, he oversees or contributes to nearly every function and decision. But his main responsibility—and the one closest to his heart—is the production of cymbals, and the ultimate decision as to what instruments pass muster. Because when all is said and done, in order for the average cymbal buyer to have a viable choice of cymbals off the shelf, the cymbal-maker has to have a very critical ear for sound and an eye for production quality controls.

"We make it very clear to all the people in the factory that they're the real secret formula for success. It's not whether the factory is located near the water; it's not the machines—it's people having a feeling of personal responsibility for every cymbal that leaves here, because musicians are going to have to *want* to play our cymbals. Our people know that every cymbal we make is going to be compared directly to an A. Zildjian or a Paiste, and that in some people's minds, because we're the new kids on the block, we'll be looked at as a junior Zildjian—at best. Like anybody else, we have production quotas to meet, so at various times the factory foreman and my father have come down hard on me because we were cutting up and re-melting whole ovens full of cymbals which for one reason or another didn't make it. But in the end, they share my standards and they've always let me have my way because, since our name won't sell the cymbals, the cymbals are going to have to sell the name.

"It's a chancy procedure, and you have to be on top of things—keep your controls up—because there are so many intangibles, and at any one point in the process, you can totally screw up an oven. Even though we have four or five people who can make a cymbal from scratch, tear apart and recalibrate the machinery—do all that tweaking—things come up that will just shatter your confidence.

"Recently we had an oven of 16" Medium-Thin *AA's* that came through," Billy confesses with impatience. "They were the perfect thickness measured anywhere you want; the perfect taper; the perfect shape; perfect hardness measured with a Rockwell scale—and they didn't sound great.

"They were good. And you could have persuaded kids to part with $100 for one. But they weren't what we were trying to do, so we threw the whole oven out. And the foreman came in enraged. 'As far as I know, we can't make a better cymbal. What are you doing? Who's right? Tell me by the end of the day or else.' So I got with Gabe and our cymbal testers, Mark Love and Peter Stairs, and told them to pick me out some good 16's because I needed to talk to this guy.

"He's not a cymbal player; he's a guy who can hold two cymbals in his hands and say, 'This is a good cymbal; this is a bad cymbal,' and 999,999 times out of a million he's right. But these cymbals had a slight mistake that had occurred on the oven floor, where it turned out the floor was uneven. The cymbals were dipping or stretching, so when they finally went into the press, they weren't flat—they were bumped. It would assume the shape of a cymbal, but there was no tension in the metal.

"You see, a cymbal is like a spring," Billy explains. "You push a piece of metal into a shape and you put it under tension like a spring. The higher the profile of a cymbal, the more tension in the metal, ergo, the tighter the vibrations, and the higher the pitch; the lower the profile, the more relaxed the metal is, the slower the vibrations, and the lower the pitch. Same thing with thickness: there's more tension in the metal because it's a thicker spring; so the tighter the vibrations and the higher the pitch, but in a different way. Even though these cymbals took on the right shape, they weren't happening.

"We're lucky we have cymbal testers who know all the facets of cymbal-making, who can translate sound knowledge into production knowledge and vice versa. Eventually, we had a brainstorming session and figured out it was something to do with the dies that press the cymbal in. It wasn't exactly the oven floors, but that had compounded the problem. And all the metallurgists in the world couldn't have figured out that chain of events unless they were going to invest $100,000 in a non-descriptive testing system to analyze the metal stress and so forth.

"It all comes down to caretaking and maintenance," Billy concludes, "so that even taking into account the element of chance, you can control your tolerances. Like in our press molds: they exert over lOO tons, and a mistake of O.005" from dirt or misalignment could throw off the point of contact, causing a break in the pressure on the metal by thousands of pounds—and that could screw up a cymbal. You have to make sure that the rings where the cymbal is pressed are true all the way around. So even with the new oven floor we just put in, you can't relax. It's composed of blocks of this chromium-nickel-iron alloy that can withstand the constant heating and cooling without buckling, cracking or bending. It will chip, though, and dust-sized chips accumulate, so we vacuum it out thoroughly every morning. That helps us to cut way down on *pit marks,* which are those little black scabs that turn up on cymbals. They're cosmetically ugly, which turns off buyers and retailers. While pit marks don't affect the sound, in a small way they'll affect the durability. With a ride cymbal that won't really get rough treatment, you can sell a drummer a sound he'll be satisfied with, but if it's near the edge on a thinner crash cymbal, you could be asking for

breakage problems. So we try to grind them out when possible, but we have a chip on our shoulder, and for a while there we were cutting up and re-melting a lot of cymbals."

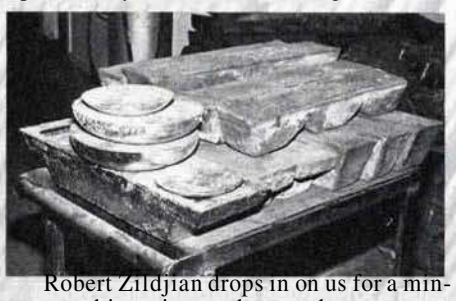
The Melting Room

Having dismissed alchemy and witchcraft from the art of cymbal-making, we were nevertheless struck by the aura of mystery pervading Sabian's brand new melting room, and Billy Zildjian's readily perceptible uptightness. It is, after all, a proprietary process, and if Billy waxed a little more general than at any point in our factory tour, or gently asked us to keep certain details of their quality controls off the record . . . well, that's understandable.

So while we didn't witness any melting or pouring, and no one told us the secret process, we can still convey a sense of this step's importance to the finished instrument.

"This is where all of your problems start that can come out later. When I started this melting room, it was mine, all mine," Billy laughs, "so I could tell the guys, 'You must clean off all the slag,' because the cleaner the casting and the more impurities we're able to skim out, the better the casting will temper and roll. We used to get silver-bearing copper from Michigan, but that's not available anymore. The Canadian copper we're using now is so pure, that when they gave me the chemical breakdown, it was listed in quantities of parts per million, which I'm really excited about. Unfortunately, what it also means is that we have to dip into the silver market to add to the alloy, but the purity of the copper gives us that much more control over the process. Likewise with the tin.

"We use metallurgical grade charcoal as a flux to take the oxides out of the metal. What happens is that as the charcoal burns, it burns away oxygen, which draws the oxides out of the metal, giving you a purer alloy and a better casting."

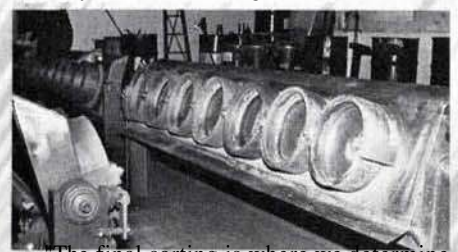


Robert Zildjian drops in on us for a minute at this point, and expands on a question we'd hoped to clear up. "The alloy is the same for the *AA*'s and the *HH*'s," he reveals. "There aren't any real differences between the original K. Zildjian alloy and what we've been doing in America for 50 years, but there are a couple of things in the melting room that they never caught on to; refinements we came up with in the '30s that we've been employing ever since. Also, as Gabriel will tell you, they were sloppy over in Turkey; temperature controls were non-existent, and they couldn't always get the best materials because of the government, so they'd buy up a couple of hundred miles of telephone cable—something called *wire bar*—which is silver-bearing copper.

"Now people have told us that he old K.'s had this greenish-brown color, and that when we began to put out the Canadian K.'s, they looked too bronze to be real K.'s. But I think some of that color is attributable to the cymbals being handled and manhandled on the way to America, and this funny hay they used to pack them in, which contributed to that distinctive tarnish. Other than that, the alloy has been essentially unchanged since the inception. The cymbals sound different because of the shape, the cup and the hammering," he observes on his way out.

"And they were using coal to heat the furnaces in Turkey, whereas we used to use natural gas, which gave us more precise temperature control," Billy adds, pointing proudly to the leviathan control panel of the electric bad boy they now employ at Sabian to heat the furnaces. "Of course natural gas was clean, but hopelessly inefficient. The control panel allows us to adjust the current in minute gradations, because as the metal gets hotter and hotter, its conductivity changes; it'll do this automatically so that someone doesn't have to stand by and ride the gain as temperatures change."

From here, Billy directs our attention to an overhead system of crucibles, from which they draw the metal. Then they pour it by hand into two arrays of die molds, one for large castings, one for small. These castings are then sorted by size, weight and quality, and separated into barrels. They're then transported from the melting room, all the way to the opposite end of the factory near the loading docks.



"The final sorting is where we determine cymbal sizes," Billy explains, "and that's done by weight. Then we let them age for at least a week. We're not sure if the molecules are settling or what; we just find that we get better results."

Rolling

"After they've aged, we put together a batch of castings the same size and do an oven. The whole operation is like a pizza oven, really. When they're sufficiently softened, glowing red hot so they're practically translucent, we take them out and roll them."

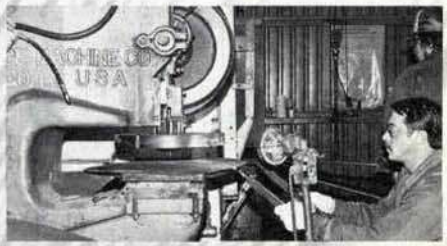
This is easily the most remarkable part of the tour. The castings are glowing so hard they look like surreal insect larvae exuding an eerie red light. Workers with long rakes, short rakes and shovels wait for the right moment, when the oven doors open and a gust of heat and noise billows outward like a gong. The withering temperatures and bone-grinding noise are followed by the violent squishing sound the castings make as they're steam-rolled down to about 50% of their original thickness.

"This is precisely what our family's secret process allows us to do that's unique; just play with it like plastic, rolling and reheating the castings anywhere from 8 to 15 times depending on the diameter and thickness of the cymbal. The process imparts a tremendous amount of structural integrity to the metal, because each pull through we roll it in another direction, so that you end up with a basket-weave of interlocking crystals. That way there's no particular grain likely to be lined up with the drumstick when you hit the cymbal—otherwise you'd crack it.

"This does two things: It makes the cymbal tougher, and helps transmit sound waves more quickly across the body of the cymbal."

Cupping

After the castings have been rolled, they look like large, dark grey plates of slate, a little thicker than the finished cymbals will actually be, with a totally nondescript, muted clang for a voice.



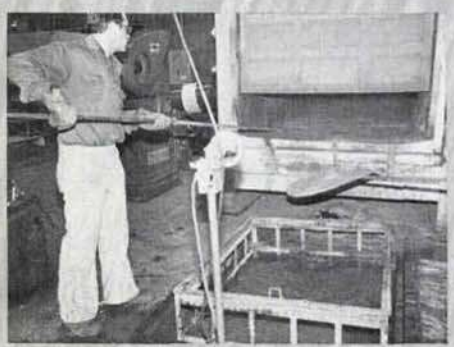
If you bashed away at it with a stick, it would break like glass. "They'll let them cool off just long enough that they can handle them with gloves," Billy continues, "then they put a chalk mark on to guide them when pressing the cup."

As in the rolling process, when the cymbals are stacked in the oven, to insulate them from the oven floor, they are laid out on *fish:* cymbal blanks that for one reason or another were taken out and used over and over again until, after constant reheating, they became too brittle and were discarded. Then, once again, out come the rakes and the tongs, as the red-hot plates are passed onto the press, where the cup is stamped into its own specific template mold, as another worker grabs onto it with his tongs and lays it out on the factory floor to cool. When these cymbal shapes have cooled off, they're dipped into a chlorine solution to remove all of the baked-on oil and grime they've picked up in the rolling and heating process, so that they won't mess up the tempering oven or the big press mold. Too bad you couldn't mount them on your set at this point (the metal still has no strength), because they take on the most astonishing psychedelic blue patterns imaginable.

"The size of the cup in relation to the taper of the bow determines the sound of the cymbal," Billy adds. "The larger the cup, the more musical or clangy the cymbal is going to be; the smaller the cup, the more breath-like, splashy and dry the cymbal will be."

Tempering

, Now comes the most critical part of the cymbal process, the step that can make or break the sound of a cymbal—tempering. Like the cupping process, this is performed in one of the original Quincy ovens, a fairly high-ceilinged design of the type used for heat-treating large metal pipes and valves. Directly in front of the oven is a basket attached to a chain, that looks a lot like an enormous deep fryer, filled with a saline solution. The cymbals must be heated at a very strictly controlled temperature for exactly the right amount of time or else they'll have wasted an oven.



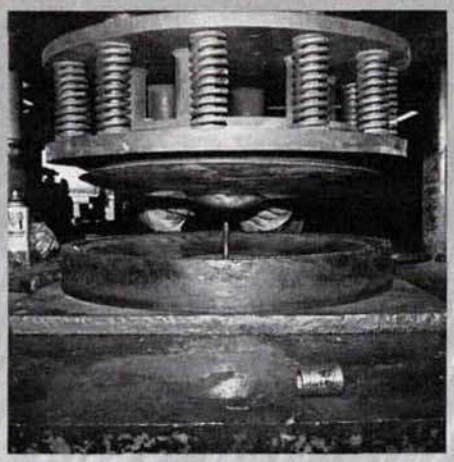
On this particular day it's raining, so it takes a little longer than usual. Finally, the proper moment arrives and the oven door rolls open. The workers then stamp down a bit on the cymbals to make sure they're as flat as possible. Then into the basket they go, making a strange, rising *dwoooooP!* sound as they hit the water.

"That's the sound of water boiling on contact with the cymbal," Billy laughs. "If you poured molten metal into the water, it would literally explode. Now I'm going to make these guys angry at me," he says, walking over to the pit and removing one of the freshly tempered cymbals. We play it with our sticks, and all of a sudden the cymbal is appreciably brighter, as it begins to take on some personality.

"That quick change in temperature tempers the cymbal. The tempering immediately forms two kinds of crystals in the metal: *hard crystals* and *soft crystals.* The hard crystals are relatively unstable, and over the years they'll gradually break down and form medium-hard crystals, medium crystals, and medium-soft crystals, so as the cymbal get older it actually becomes softer, though it sounds harder and more brittle. The quantity of the soft crystals is fixed the instant it hits the water, and that's why the oven temperature and the amount of time the cymbals are heated are so critical. If you have too many soft crystals, the cymbal is going to sound like garbage, and if you have too few, it'll break the minute you hit it. So as the hard crystals migrate and break down into medium crystals, they act as glue between the hard and soft crystals. They help the cymbal flex, so you can bend it more."

Pressing and Bumping

Now the workers begin a race against time. With tempering, the cymbal has its structure, and they've got approximately 15 minutes to perform several operations. In short order they drill a hole into the cup, cut the cymbal into the shape of a perfect circle (this excess metal is re-melted to make new castings), check it on a flat table for warpage, and put it on top of a fish and press it on its own template—if it's going to be a machine-hammered *AA.*



"The reason time is so important now is because, if they don't get the cymbal pressed in 15 minutes, it'll never leave the shape it assumed when it hit the water, or you'll end up with a cymbal that snaps back like a piece of spring steel, which is

real trouble. After a few minutes you can see that the metal isn't quite so ductile, so there's a bar on the side of the press where they'll perform a process we call *backbending.* You take the cymbal and stress the metal by bending it and turning it, then bending it and turning it in the opposite direction, which sort of loosens the metal and makes it press better after the metal starts asserting its shape.

"Now we do something different with the *HH* cymbals. This is the old Quincy drop hammer, which has a foot-operated clutch for controlling the hammer strikes. What they'll do is take a stack of three, guide them along an anvil, go *blam-blam-blam* and *bump* them into the rough shape of a cymbal. Bumping buys the guys a little more time because it's such a violent process—it literally orders the cymbals to get into shape. It's like backbending and pressing in one step. We're getting such good results from it that we're considering bumping some *AA's,* or a combination of bumping and pressing."

Hand Hammering

At this point in the tour, we're joined in the hand-hammering room by Robert Zildjian, Gabe and Kerope Zilcan, and shortly thereafter by Sabian's regular hand-hammering crew: ex-boxer Leroy Sullivan, his son George, Mark Clark and Charlie Brown. The latter have just bumped an oven full of 20" Medium Rides, and this is the part we've been waiting to see. There is no possible way to convey the quality of sound as metal hammers metal; they're all wearing protective headsets to mute the noise, but each blow of the hammer penetrates right down to your marrow. There's nothing like it in all of cymbal-making.

Kerope converses freely in French with Robert, pausing occasionally to question Gabriel in Armenian, with criticisms and suggestions for their hammerers. "Drummers say to us there is a K. sound," Kerope says through Gabe. "Is no *one* K. sound. Many different cymbals, all different, No one style. All done by hand. No machines. Very difficult but very good. Workers very, very good; start in factory when they're 12 years old. We make the cups by hand. Have a special ballpeen sledge hammer, special anvil. Hammer peen must be just the right shape and hardness. Workers hold five or six cymbals, very hot, and hit with hammer. Each cup different, so each cymbal different. So how can there be one sound?"

"You got some great ones, and some not so great," Gabe giggles. "Some of the cymbals would be very flat with a sharply defined cup, and those would usually end up in the hands of symphonic drummers and hand-cymbal players. Others would have a very high bow with a smaller cup, and those you could use to play jazz, to ride on. My father showed us how to make *HH* cymbals, and he told us it wasn't necessary to hammer the cups; it's too inconsistent, so we use machines to stamp them. We don't make a cymbal with such a high profile now as we used to make in Istanbul. If you make a cymbal with too high a profile, it won't sound good. The way we do it now there's more margin for error, shapewise, because of the amount of variation you get from hand-hammering. We're finding that a lot of the rock guys are using the *HH* cymbals because some of them are mellow, but have a brighter stick sound, more attack, while others have a darker, softer feel. The main thing is that if you get the shape right, you get the sound right, too."

"Right," Billy interjects. "You see, there are very infinitesimal differences in the heating of each casting, which means they're going to react a little more or a little less to the final rolling; so you'll get subtle differences in thickness from cymbal to cymbal. Kerope and Gabe trained our guys to play the bounce of the cymbal; play it by feel. In its own way, it's sort of like what you do when you're riding a cymbal, hitting it a little harder or softer as you go along. So if a cymbal comes through that's a little thicker, they'll actually hit it harder without really being conscious of the changes in hand pressure. Then what they'll do is turn the cymbal over and hammer the bottom where it needs it, checking it on a template just like Gabe has in the testing room."

"My father is always curious about the hammer marks not being right," Gabe continues, "whether they're too small or too many. And he hates it if they hammer around the cup base, because we never hammered like that in Turkey. If the cup is sunken, that is no good. The cymbal will sound dead and out-of-tune."

"In advertising language, we can claim that we hand tune each cymbal," Billy says, "but in reality, we just push the consistency up by getting the shape right and repairing the warped ones before they get too far along, sorting out the ones that haven't been tempered right after just a couple of hammer strokes. And there will always be a lot of variety in the sound because of differences in hand pressure and thickness, so each cymbal gets more or less hammering based on how much it needs.

"You *can feel* all that," Billy continues enthusiastically, pointing to the rounded, tempered peen of the anvil, the extension for hammering the cups, and the special short-handled hammers with their gleaming rounded peens. "If they don't look fresh and shiny like that, you're crazy to hammer with it. They'll wear the peen out and re-grind them every day so it doesn't flatten out on them. But the more grinding you do, the more you throw off the temper of the hammer, so we replace them very often. God knows you can't wear heavy leather gloves when you're hammering; you'd kill your hands. So the guys generally don't wear any, or else they wear very thin cotton ones."

continued on page 92

Sometimes, jazz just seems to run in the family. There are the Joneses (Hank, Thad and Elvin), Chuck and Gap Mangione, Tootie, Percy and Jimmy Heath, the Brecker Brothers, the Brubecks (Dave, Darius, Chris and Danny), and the LaBarberas—saxophonist Pat, arranger John, and drummer Joe. Despite this impressive list, one should not assume that simply being a member of such a family guarantees success. We could name a number of musicians whose names you wouldn't recognize, despite the fact that they have famous parents and/or siblings. Often, it is actually harder for such people to make it, as they are immediately saddled with the burden of "living up to" the family name.

his family's name; he made a significant contribution to making that name what it is—despite being the youngest member. After studying with Alan Dawson at Berklee, Joe worked with such artists as Gap Mangione, Woody Herman, Esther Satterfield, Chuck Mangione, Bob Brookmeyer, and was with the Bill Evans Trio for the last two years of the pianist's life. Since that time, Joe has been touring with singer Tony Bennett.

We spoke with Joe in Toronto, where Bennett was appearing. After the engagement, Joe was leaving for the West Coast to join his wife and daughter in their new home, having decided to leave the Woodstock, New York area where they had been living for the past few years. We found Joe LaBarbera off stage to be very much as he is on: very disciplined and totally in control. He's also a very nice man.

KA: You and your brothers have certainl y made your mark in music. Were your parents musical also?

JL: Yeah, my father was a civil engineer, but he played the piano, and he always had bands on the side. My mother learned to play the bass so we could have a family orchestra, and we did that for a number of years. We played for community groups, did weddings and, you know, any kind of a function where you need a band, we did it.

KA: Did you find that a good training ground?

JL: It was great, because I was playing gigs when I was five years old. I was out getting my money, and going to the bank and whatever, and I was learning.

KA: You were playing professionally at five years old?

JL: Yeah. Not good mind you, but I was doing it because it was fun, and we did it as a family. We did everything as a family. We were all in the Boy Scouts together, we went camping together, took our vacations together, so really, anything that kept us together was good, and the music was a part of that.

KA: Did you know then that you wanted to become a full-time musician—a professional drummer?

JL: Not really. That was from the age of five until about the age of 13 and I mainly liked the attention I got from being up in front of people. It didn't really register that this was what I wanted to do with my life. But at around 13, or maybe a little earlier, Pat, my oldest brother, started bringing home some records that were really important and that changed my life. They were records by people like Miles, Coltrane and Bill Evans, and after hearing records like those, I knew what I wanted to do. When I heard that music, I knew I was hearing something that was really important to me, and it made a difference.

KA: You went on to study at the Berklee School of Music in Boston.

JL: The reason I went to Berklee was because both of my brothers had gone to a state teachers college, but after a while dropped out and went to Berklee, and they advised me to go straight there. Berklee was the first school that devoted studies to jazz, and that was really where it was at.

KA: You're still close to your brothers?

JL: Yeah, I am, but we don't get to see each other very often, especially now that I'm living on the West Coast. But the family's still very important to me. My own personal family—I have a little girl three years old now—is totally important to me. To me that's everything; it's what it's all about.

KA: Why the move to L.A.?

JL: A lot of reasons—some personal ones regarding my family. My wife Carol's family is out there, and it's best that we be near them at this time, but there are also some professional reasons. I've kind of changed my attitude lately. You know, I was always a New York-style person and I always wanted to be in on that scene. But when Bill Evans died, it changed a lot of things for me. I was working with him at the time, and New York just doesn't seem the same to me. Now, this could be totally in my head, but the way I see the scene without Bill or his spirit there, it just doesn't have the attraction for me anymore. So I'm anxious to get started on the West Coast, play with some different players and see what's happening out there.

KA: Will this move make it easier with Tony Bennett's tours? Is the Bennett group out of L.A.?

JL: Actually, it makes very little difference. Now, there are two of us in L.A., and two of us in New York, so it doesn't really matter.

KA: Okay, so back to your formal education. Did you graduate from Berklee?

JL: No, I studied there for about two and a half years, and left, mainly because I was anxious to start working. I learned a lot during the time I was there though. Alan Dawson, who was my drum teacher, is a very fine drummer himself, and I think it would be a mistake not to mention him and what he did for me in the short time that I studied with him.

KA: What did he do for you?

JL: Well, I could barely read drum music when I got to Berklee. I had played saxophone, clarinet, and drums all at the same time from about the age of five through high school. In fact, I played saxophone in the high school stage band rather than drums. So I could read music, but I was really terrible at reading drum music because I just wasn't working at it. My biggest problem was being able to transfer what I saw to my hands, because I was so used to working my fingers individually on keys. Alan really got my reading together in a short amount of time.

Plus, his overall concept of four-way coordination did me a world of good. He recognized right away that I'd had experience playing music and that I understood music. He expanded on that by giving me certain exercises to help me play more melodically and within the framework of a tune. That's one of Alan's big points: practicing playing on song structures, or whatever structure you might be improvising on. That helped me out a great deal. As for technique, he has some great exercises to get your chops loosened up. Overall, he improved my ability to play the drums and play music.

KA: Was there much that you had to learn from a technical perspective?

JL: No, I had pretty good ability on the drums. You know, I could play, and I could keep time, but I just needed to brush up on my reading, and Alan did me a world of good in that department. He's got a few students out there; Tony Williams and Harvey Mason among them. He's probably one of the finest teachers that there are today.

KA: When did you leave Berklee?

JL: I left Berklee in 1968, and went on the road with a pop singer. His name was Frankie Reynolds; not a big name, but he was pretty much in the style of Tony Bennett. I was with him for about a year before I got drafted.

KA: You were in the army?

JL: Yeah, but I was really very lucky, because that was like the height of the Cambodian bombings. To get in a band, number one, and to not even be shipped out, that was a miracle.

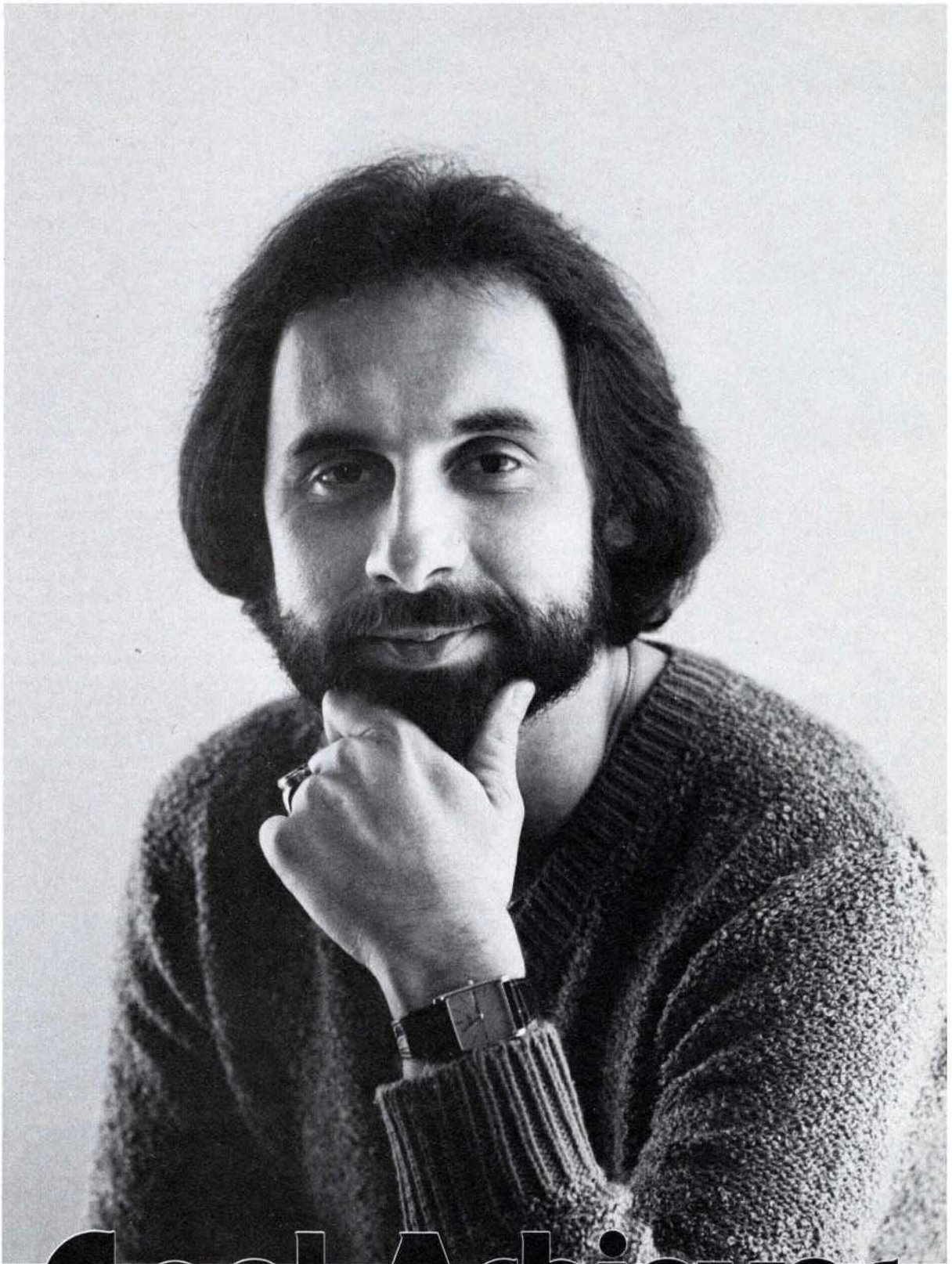
KA: So you were playing during that time.

JL: I was stationed in Fort Dix, which is only about 90 minutes from New York. We were playing marches. We used to march up and down the streets of Philadelphia every weekend in a bit of a parade.

KA: That must have been interesting.

JL: Well . . . let's just say it was better than being shot at. I don't make light of that period, and a couple of times I did get to go to New York and sub for Buddy Rich. He was having back trouble at the time, so I went out a couple of times and

Joe LaBarbera



Goal Achiever

by Katherine Alleyne & Judith Sullivan McIntosh

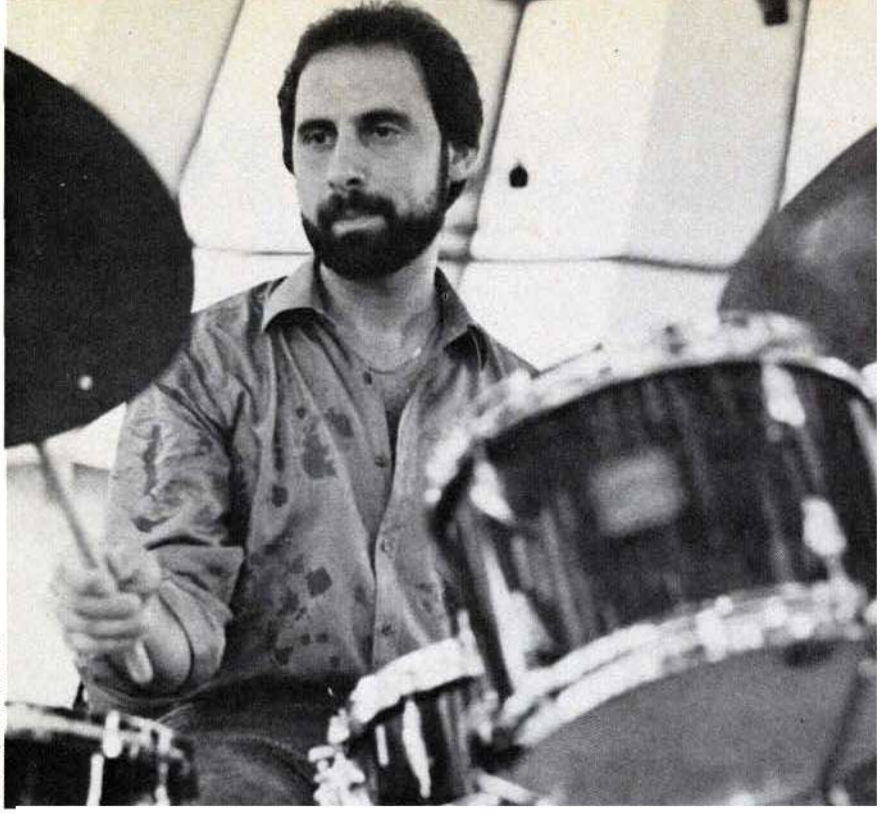


Photo by Mark A. Vinci

did that.

KA: How long were you in the army?

JL: Two years. After I got out, I worked with Chuck Mangione's brother, Gap, in Rochester, in a kind of cocktail-lounge situation before going on to work with Woody Herman for a year. Then I was with Chuck for about four years before going to New York City. That was my big move to actually get into playing jazz full time, and I did in fact do that. I got to play with all of the people I wanted to play with, you know, Jim Hall, Phil Woods, all of them. I must've played every club in New York. Every club in the Village for sure; the Village Vanguard, Seventh Avenue South, Sweet Basil, and Harper's.

KA: When did you meet Bill Evans?

JL: That must have been around October of 1978. I was working in New York and just starting to get busy in the studios. I was getting some calls for jingles, and Helen Keane, who was Bill's manager, called me up and said that Bill was looking for a drummer. At first, I actually said "No," because I had been on the road with all these bands, and it's always the same thing. After a while you either get bugged with the music, or the money, or the personalities, right? So I didn't really want to go right back into that. But Bill was playing at the Village Vanguard, and eventually I decided to go down and play a set. I tell you, it was like putting on a suit that was made for me. The three of us just clicked. Bill even came over and said, "Have you been checking out my books or my records, or what? You know the arrangements and everything." It was just one of those things, and from then on I was hooked. I still didn't know if I wanted to do it full time, but after playing a couple of nights with him, I just had to do it because I was getting to play exactly the way I wanted to play with truly one of the greatest musicians of all time.

KA: There was a lot of interaction between the three of you in that group. Did you find that to be a challenge?

JL: The challenge mainly was to try and play up to Bill's level, because he set a standard that was unbelievable. As for interaction, it was automatic. That's the way he was, and fortunately, the three of us were similar in that respect. It started right away, and just got better and better.

KA: How long did you work with Bill Evans?

JL: Two years, and for me, that trio was one of the best playing experiences I've ever had, because I was actually able to be myself totally. You know, there was no role that I had to play—don't sound like this guy or that guy, just go out and play yourself—and it was welcomed by Bill. I may sound like I'm blowing my own horn, but I was proud of that group. You can count on two hands the number of times a group of musicians have really sounded like one voice and have really made a musical statement. There wasn't a night when I wasn't racing to that gig, and at the end of the night I felt like something really was said. I used to go home and feel great. It doesn't happen all the time. What you have to understand as a performer is that you can't expect it every night, and you can't expect it with every job. So you come to really revere the times when you have had it, and I have. We went all over Europe and the U.S. together, and I got to work with one of my heroes. Bill was probably the most influential piano player in the last three decades, and to me personally, he was a hero. He was a hero before I worked with him, and afterwards he became even more of a hero, because he was a no-compromise kind of musician and a no-compromise kind of individual, even off the bandstand. He was the kind of person you'd hope you could be more like. He came up with a style of playing that was totally unique at a time when hard bop was fashionable, you know, in the late '50s and early '60s. It was such a simple format with piano, bass and drums, but it was almost like expressionism, you know. In fact, it was exactly like that—three people playing spontaneously and sounding like one voice in a more free-flowing or maybe delicate sound as opposed to what Max or Art Blakey would have gotten. Harmonically complex, but lyrical and melodic—a very beautiful type of playing.

KA: You refer to Bill Evans as a no-compromise musician. Do you see yourself as having made compromises?

JL: Sure. Most of us have. There was a time when people were always pointing an accusing finger at a musician who was thought to be "selling out." But really, that doesn't even apply, because there's a reality to this business that means staying alive and keeping your self-respect. When I was with Bill Evans, to me, that was like one of the premier jazz jobs in the world. But when we were off, I used to work club dates with accordion players or whoever, you know, just to stay alive; just to make the rent. So I feel there's no selling out, unless you've totally turned your back on something that you firmly believe in. I'm a sideman, so there are a lot of things in the business that I just don't have to deal with. People like Chuck Mangione or Tony Bennett have to deal with the producers, the record company people, and the money people. When you've got those types of people telling you, "sell X number of records or you're out," that kind of pressure sometimes makes you do things you wouldn't ordinarily want to do in order to stay up there. But Bill Evans was willing to just ride the crest of wherever his artistic

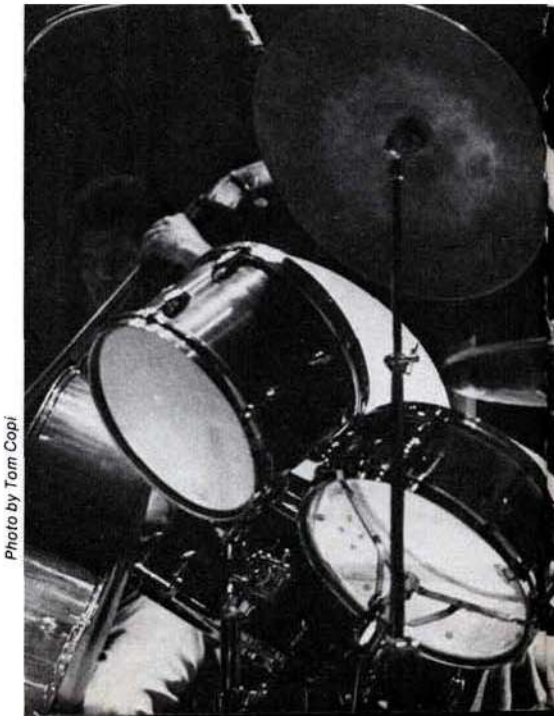


Photo by Tom Copi

ability took him. In other words, if he was hot this year and people were loving it, great, he wasn't changing what he was doing; but if it wasn't popular the next year, well, then that was fine too.

KA: Do you find this tour with Tony Bennett much different from other groups you've toured with?

JL: Not really, the life-style is exactly the same. My brother Pat said something a long time ago, referring to jobs where you travel: "The music changes; everything else stays the same." And he travels more than I do. He's in Europe now, with Elvin Jones.

KA: So you don't enjoy the traveling?

JL: It gets tiring after a while, and now that I have a family, I would certainly like to be home. But this is how I've chosen to make my living, and at this particular moment, it's what I'm doing, so I can deal with it. Fortunately, my wife can deal with it as well, which is a miracle, because it's hard raising a child alone most of the time.

KA: How often are you away?

JL: It's hard to pin down. To give you an example, I was home yesterday, I'm working today, and I'll be home tomorrow. The longest I would be away from home on the outside would be three weeks, but that happens very rarely. Generally, we go out for 10 to 15 days, and then we're back home.

KA: Do you see yourself continuing on here for a while?

JL: It's hard to say, really. I can't answer that question until I see what's happening in L.A. But down the road, I don't see myself traveling forever and ever.

KA: What kind of future is there for a professional musician who does not choose to travel?

JL: There are actually quite a few options. Take, for example, the band we worked with today. You're looking at a band that's full of great musicians, and they'll all stay here and play a variety of jobs. The thing with traveling is that if you want to do only one specific type of playing, whether it's jazz or something different, then you can't stay in one city and do it over and over again because people get tired of it, so you have to travel with it. But if you're willing to do different things, there are a wide variety of gigs out there.

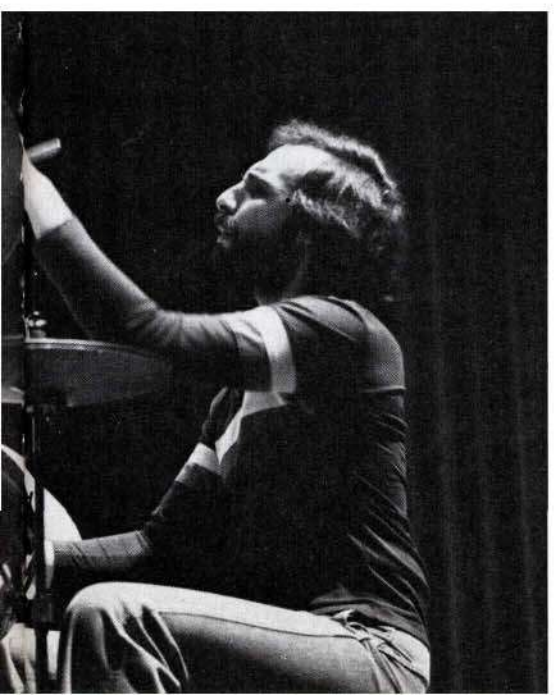


Photo by Tom Copi

KA: There's a large recording industry and movie industry on the West Coast. Are you looking to get into some of those types of things?

JL: I could handle that. But you know, I just really want to concentrate on playing jazz again. I mean, that's why I started to play the drums; that's why I got interested in it.

KA: Does it bother you that you haven't been doing more jazz? I'm assuming that after doing a tour like this you don't have the energy to do as much as you'd like on a creative level.

JL: Well, actually, I do have the energy, but there's just not the opportunity right now. Number one, Tony takes up at least 30 weeks a year of my life, and I have to save a certain amount of time for my family. Also, to be truthful, there's been very little in the way of creative jazz playing that's come my way since I've been doing other things. What happens is that people generally categorize you, you know. Once you're doing a show-biz job, they forget about you—there's always someone else they can get. It also has a lot to do with being available.

KA: Throughout your career, you seem to have worked with very positive people. People who, when you mention their names, don't have any scandal or any of that other type of life-style that is often associated with the music business. Is that by chance, or is it a combination of chance and hard work?

JL: That's actually by design, if you want to know the truth, because I have to be able to get along with the people I work with, otherwise it's no good. So there's no point in even thinking about working with somebody who has a lot of hang ups or who you can't get along with, because you have to spend a lot of time with them when you're traveling. Personally, I don't like anything that interferes with the music; anything whatsoever. When you're on that bandstand, that's it. You're there to play, and I don't want to hear anything about hang ups or anything else.

KA: The life-styles of many musicians, and particularly jazz musicians, have always been very closely linked with things like drugs, until it's become almost like the illicit part of jazz—a motivating force for a lot of the musicians, or so the media would make it out to be.

JL: Well, yeah . . . it's closely associated, but when you say the motivating force, I think really it's a buffer or a padding that a lot of musicians use to cancel out something in their personal lives so they can get up there and play. I don't know any musician—and I've known some hard drug users—who would tell you they play better or reach a plateau of consciousness through drugs. Usually they're just trying to mask something that they can't deal with. I've lost some close friends through drugs, and I feel pretty strongly about it. Maybe I'm intolerant in my attitudes about that side of the business, but that's the way I feel.

KA: Is that your Catholic background?

JL: I guess in part. I used to go to Catholic school, with the nuns. You can imagine the shock when they asked us to bring in pictures of what we wanted to grow up and do. I must have been in about the 7th or 8th grade, and I brought in pictures of 'Trane,

continued on page 104

Percussive Potpourri

HARDY STAND-OFF

Bruce Hardy, formerly with Deadringer, has formed his own company and is producing drum mic' holders. *Stand-Off is* designed to mount against the drumshell by hooking around a tension rod. The holder uses a knurled knob and screw hook to place the base flush with the shell. A black *Lexan* cylinder housing sits atop the mounting piece. Inside the cylinder is a foam shock mount with a short chromed post sticking up. The post has a three-inch fixed height, and is threaded to fit most mic' adaptors. The *Stand-Off* can be installed or removed in seconds, due to the fact that you do not need to remove the tension rod. I used a few *Stand-Offs* on my own drumkit and found them to be noiseless with very good isolation. For bass drum miking, I used a *Stand-Off on* the bottom of a rack tom, along with a gooseneck, pointing downward. This enabled me to get the mic' right through the small hole I had cut in the front head.

After a long period of use, the foam isolator will begin to sag towards the edge of the cylinder. However, the company is working on a neoprene open-cell sponge to combat this. The *Stand-Off* does away with regular mic' stands, gives an uncluttered look, and works very well. An adjustable-height mic' post might be a nice addition.

Since there are only a certain number of positions where a *Stand-Off* can be mounted on a drum, the desired miking spot may be difficult to achieve. One option is to go with a gooseneck or with the *Stand-Off Extendor.* The *Extendor* is basically a flat metal piece with two threaded holes at one end, and a threaded mic' flange at the other. It can be used to mike two drums with a single microphone, or merely as a right-angled extension of the *Stand-Off* post. Hardy has also designed a *Stand-Off to* fit cymbal and hi-hat stands (and drum stands, as well). The *C.S. Stand-Off* has the same basic features as the regular model but is modified to allow horizontal mounting (facing upward). An enlarged hook and curved mount piece are used to accomplish this and, like the regular model, the C.S. holds position very well.

The *C. W. Stand-Off* allows mounting of cowbells and woodblocks using the same principle as the microphone *Stand-Off.* Instead of a foam shock mount, the cylinder has double metal posts inside and a U-rod attached on top. The left side of the U-rod is for cowbell; the right is threaded, has a wing nut, and is intended for a woodblock. To mount a woodblock on this would entail drilling a 1/4" hole in the block, which I'm reluctant to do. Perhaps substituting a small cymbal post would be a better idea. Also, the U-rod is welded in place, so it is impossible to place the cowbell on the right and the block on the left.

The *Stand-Off* models work nicely, are sturdy, and are good alternatives to a clutter of mic' stands. The *Regular, C.S.,* and *C. W. Stand-Offs* retail at $24.95; the *Extendor* retails at $8.95.

L.P. CLAW

Laun Percussion also has a drum-mounted mic' holder. *The Claw* is made of solid metal with a built-in shock mount, and clamps onto any drum rim. The mic'-holder rod is bent at a right angle, which enables the mic' to be brought in closer or placed further away, merely by reversing the rod's direction. Atop the rod is a flange which will fit most all mic' adaptors. *The Claw* has the advantage of adjustable height.

The Claw is quite a bit heavier than the seven-ounce *Stand-Off.* I could not get *The Claw* to a solid stationary position on my own drums, even when the clamp was tightened all the way. It still moved just a little, and its weight may be one reason why. Retail: $29.50.

Another *Claw* model is made for percussion accessories, having a straight rod for mounting of cowbells, etc. Retail: $27.50.

WUHAN JING CYMBALS

The famous Wuhan factory in China has been turning out instruments for years and years. World Percussion in California is distributing many of the Wuhan products, but the ones that really struck me are the *Jing* cymbals. These are essentially pairs of hand cymbals, available in three sizes: small, medium, and large (roughly 3", 5", and 7"). The *Jing* cymbals have upturned edges and oversized raised cups. When hit with a drumstick, a *Jing* cymbal will very closely approximate the sound of a loud cymbal bell—especially if mounted upside down. The cutting power is simply incredible! Since they are only sold in pairs, you get *two* "bell" cymbals for a price range from $27.00 to $46.00. I bought a pair of the 7" *Jings,* and found that they suited my needs perfectly—a welcome addition to any drumkit. For more info: World Percussion, PO Box 502, Capitola, CA 95010.

KEPLINGER SNARE DRUMS

Keplinger drums have hand-crafted, custom-made shells machined of 1/8" plate stock, in either Stainless Steel or Black Iron. The company's main business is the shells, but they do offer hardware-equipped drums as well. The Keplinger I saw was a 5 1/2 x 14 with a stainless-steel shell and chrome finish. (Other platings are available.) The drum had eight double-ended Rogers lugs, Pearl Gladstone-style

by Bob Saydlowski, Jr.

throw-off, Rogers butt, Ludwig 20-strand plastic-ended snares, Gretsch die-cast hoops, and Remo *Ambassador* heads. There is no muffler, and a single venthole is punched into the shell. The drum is heavy, weighing in at 16 pounds.

Being a steel shell, I found it to be very "ringy," but an external damper worked fine to cut down on those overtones. The drum has a very crisp, solid sound and great response at all playing volumes. The die-cast hoops did make for a "clonky"-sounding rimshot, though. Taking this into account, Keplinger has since changed to regular pressed hoops. The drum is capable of a variety of sounds with the coated *Ambassador* head alone. It seems to work well in all situations—rock, jazz, lounge, etc.

Besides the 5 1/2" depth, the Stainless is available in 6", 6 1/2", and 8". Prices for the shells alone range from $240 to $270. For a complete 8-lug drum with their selection of hardware, prices increase by $120. They will also set up the shells with hardware you supply at no extra charge, as well as do custom sizes and platings. For more info: Soundynamics, 2204 N. 56 St., Seattle, WA 98103.

The following information on Avanti cymbals was accidentally omitted from the Equipment Reference on cymbals which appeared in the August issue of MD.

Size	Price
10" Splash	$30
12" Splash	$45
14"	$55
15"	$60
16"	$70
18" (crash)	$90
18" (ride)	$110
20"	$105
20" (heavy)	$120
22"	$145
22" (medium)	$165
13" HH	$100
14" HH	$110
14" Hvy HH	$115
15" HH	$120
15" Hvy HH	$130

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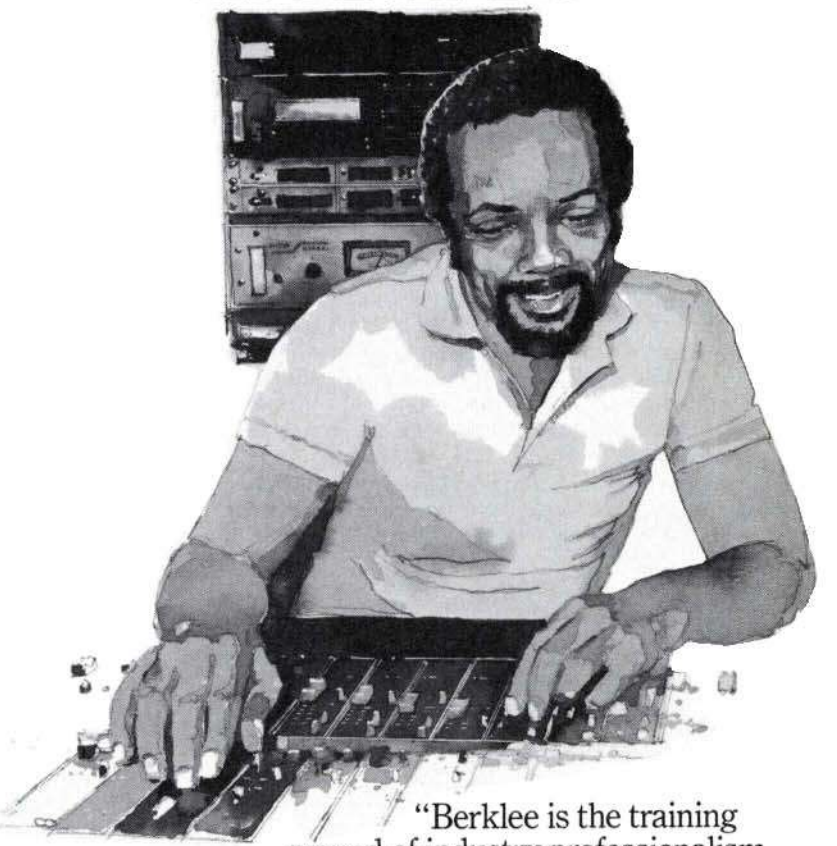

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by David Garibaldi

A Beat Study

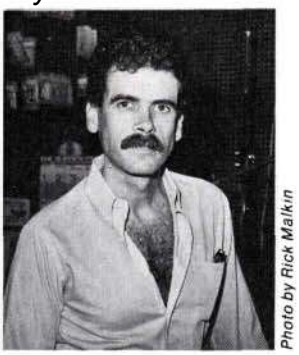
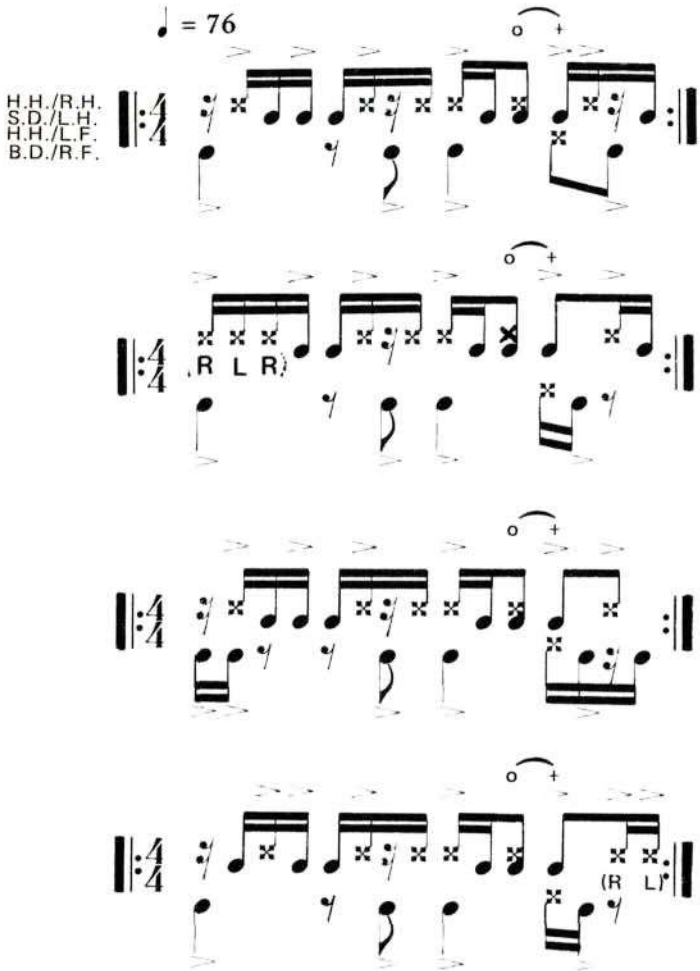
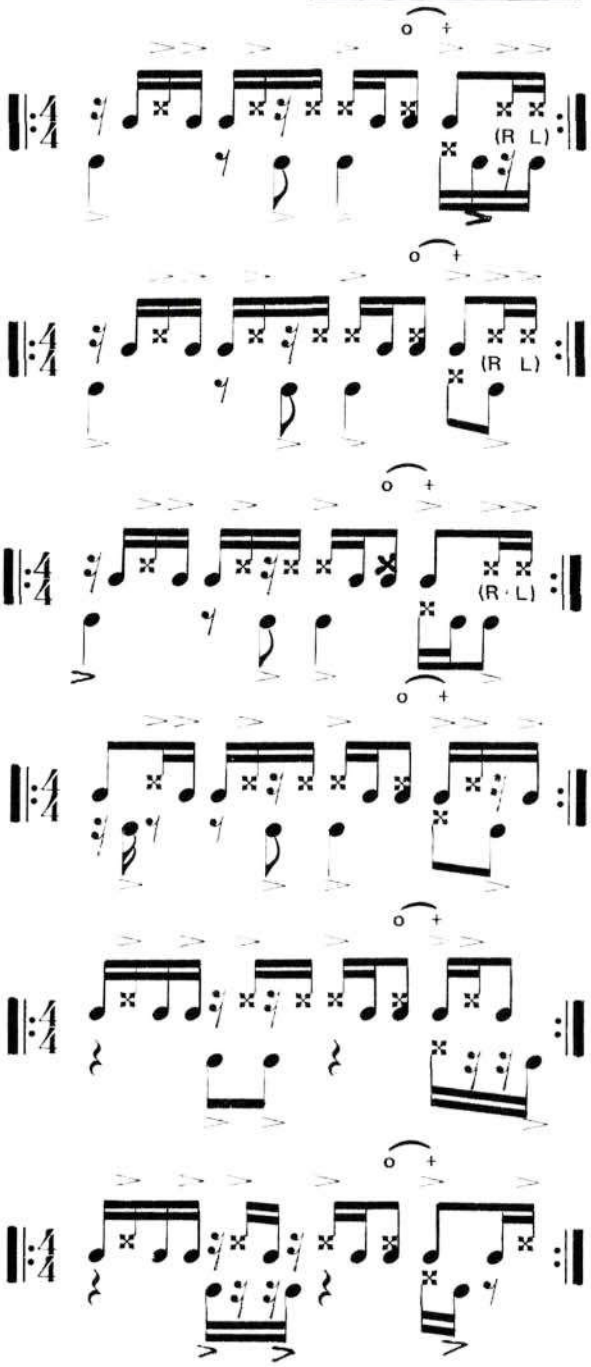


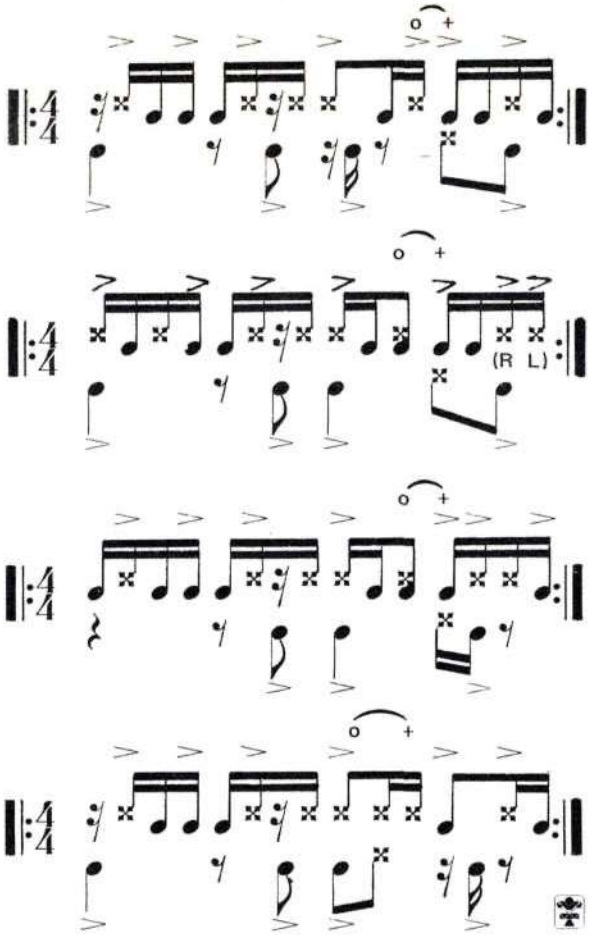
Photo by Rick Malkin

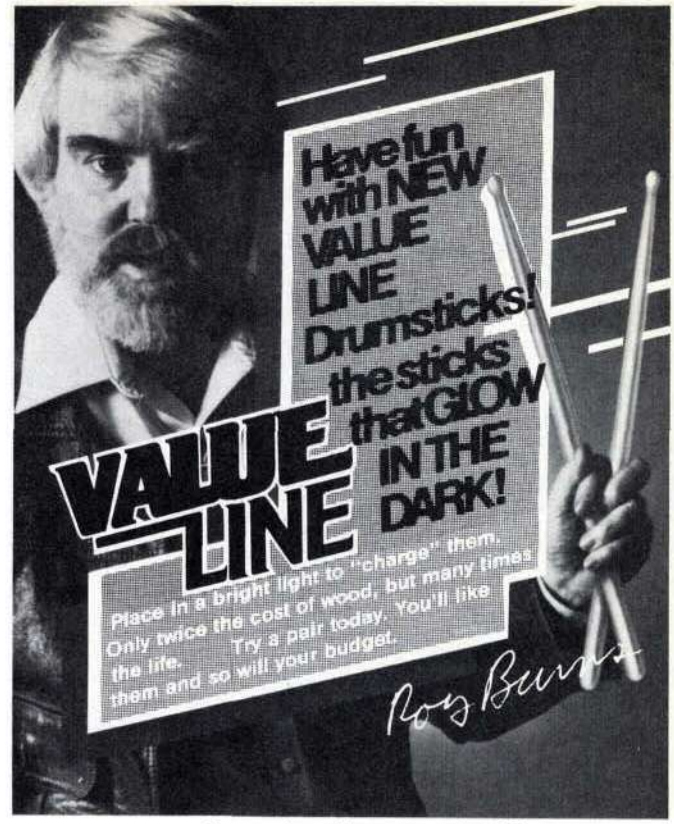
The following musical examples comprise what I term a "beat study." It is by no means exhaustive (every possible variation), but simply presents *related lime* feels.

Bar 1 is the pattern on which all the others are based. The focus of this study is the development of two sound levels within the exchange of hands and feet: the accented and unaccented notes. The best way I've found to communicate these contrasting levels is to liken them to the difference between a whisper and a shout. It also helps to use two stick heights: one-half inch at the *highest* for unaccented notes, and 8" or so for the accented notes. It's much easier to play quietly when the sticks are as close to the playing surface as possible. In general, playing loudly isn't the problem. The problem is getting the unaccented notes soft enough so that there's dynamic contrast between all the limbs.

When practicing this material, play each example for five minutes without stopping. Pay close attention to the sounds you're getting. Also, as always, the first priority should be solid, even timekeeping.



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by Robyn Flans

Sandy Nelson

Photo by Rick Malkin

For those who grew up in the '60s, Sandy Nelson needs little introduction. Those who are not familiar with him should find someone who has one or 35 of Sandy's albums and start listening! One of the few drummers to have a hit with a drum record, some 20 years later, Sandy's style is still talked about, analyzed, and emulated.

RF: You once mentioned that you had a smattering of lessons and "fell" into rock 'n' roll. How does somebody fall into rock 'n'roll?

SN: We have to go back to 1947 or so. You've heard the old cliche, "Yes, when he was old enough to stand up, he would grab the knobs of the radio and jump up and down." My parents would relate that about me years later. I guess I was jumping up and down to Benny Goodman or bands of the'40s.

When I was about five or six, I had a small phonograph of my own in my room. At three or four in the morning, I'd get a cold sweat and would have to listen to something. I'd take records out of the front room and put them on low level in my room so I wouldn't get caught.

There was a tune called "Rose Room" that I remember. Spike Jones' records really made an impact on me. Other kids in the neighborhood always made fun of me because I was in the garage banging on pots and pans to Spike Jones records, while they were out playing baseball. Those same kids grew up to be accountants, and although I'm no longer banging on pots and pans, drumming is an extension of that. I think what you do as a youngster really has a lot to do with what you are going to do when you grow up.

RF: Who were some of your drumming influences?

SN: Well, technically speaking, Spike Jones was a drummer, and my parents took me to see him at the Orpheum in downtown Las Vegas. I was so impressed in Las Vegas that, after the curtains closed, I chased Spike backstage through the kitchen and my mother had to chase after me. I remember being at the Orpheum with all the spotlights and the drum shadows on the curtains, and everybody standing up in the aisles yelling, "Gene Krupa!" That must have been around 1947. I remember dancing in the aisle, seeing Gene's silver sparkle set, and the shadows of his hands and sticks on the curtains were incredible. That made an impression on me.

I got a set of drums for Christmas when I was seven. Bebop was starting to come in.

RF: Did you take lessons?

SN: Well, the siege with the drums when I was real small didn't last too long. I just lost interest. Actually, I started to play boogie on the piano when I was about nine, but from there on up to when I was 16, I wasn't interested in the drums.

All through high school, I was in stage crew. One afternoon there was going to be a drum battle. There were three sets of drums on stage. No one was in the auditorium except myself and another fellow up in the lights. There were no sticks, so I got two wooden coathangers and used them. While I sat there at the middle set and started to thump along, the guy started focusing the lights. I visualized 800 people out there, with me doing a drum solo like the one I saw Gene Krupa doing. I thought, "This is it. I am going to be a drummer."

In a way, Ben Pollack was one of my first influences. What he would do was take a brush and whisk along on the bass drum while he was playing with his left hand on the snare. That influenced my recording of "Teen Beat" years later. The last minute or so, I had a stick on the bass drum.

First lessons. When I was still at the Bruin Theatre, down on Westwood Blvd., there was a little music store where one of the drum teachers was Bob Winslow. He had taken from Murray Spivak, who I had heard about from my father since I was real small. When I heard that Bob Winslow had taken from Murray, I thought he had to be okay. I started taking lessons from him in 1956 when I was 17.

RF: Were you interested in learning how to read?

SN: No. Number one, I was intimidated by my own mental blocks. I was terrible at math, so when they started talking about 8th notes or 16th notes, they lost me. Bob Winslow started me on a book which involved open rolls with five- and seven-stroke rolls, and the up and down strokes. However, like a lot of young fellows, I wanted to boogie.

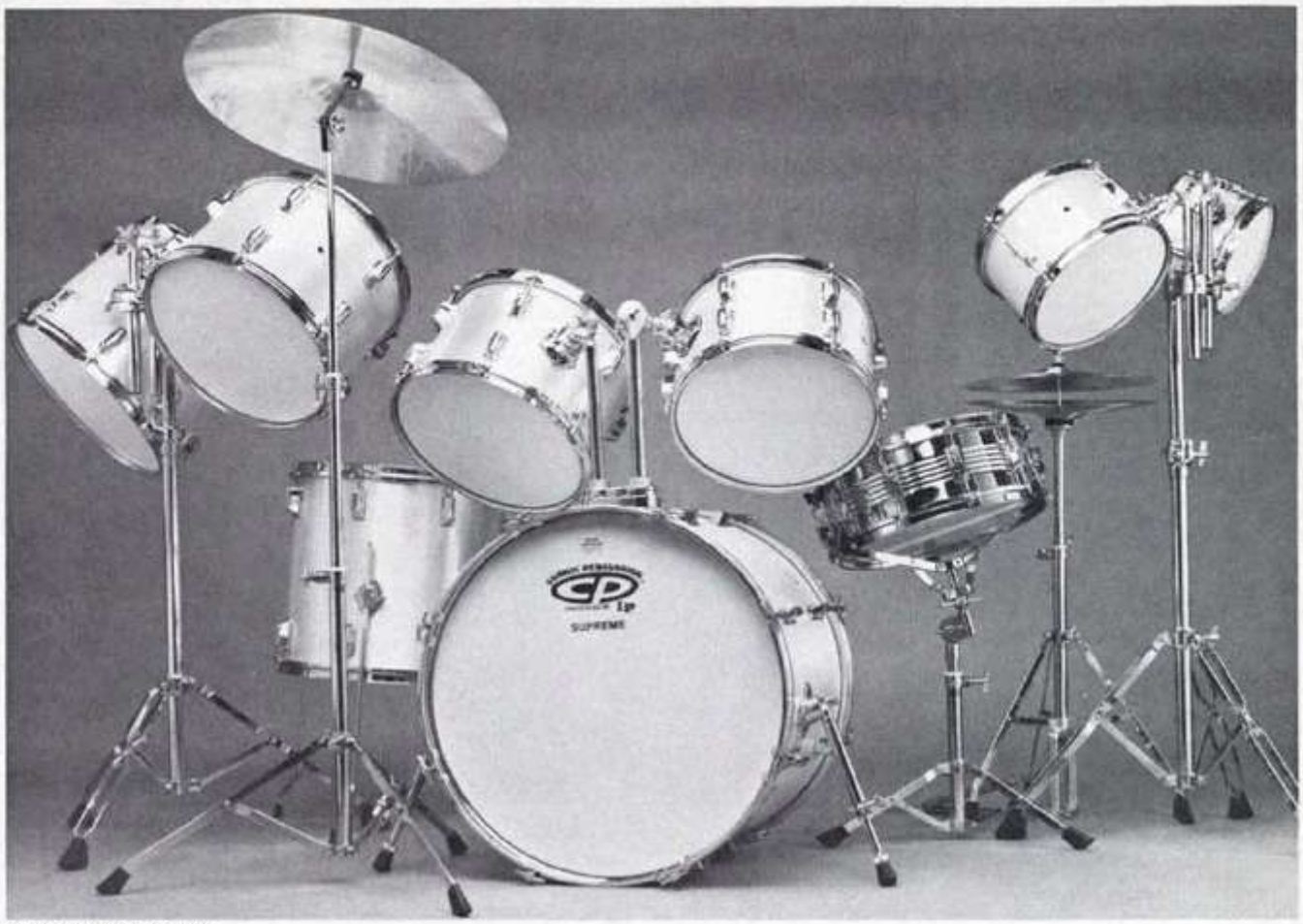
RF: Had you already decided you were going to be a professional?

SN: Yeah, what I wanted to do was get into rock 'n' roll drumming because it was exciting at the time with Buddy Holly and, well . . . actually, there wasn't a lot else. There wasn't really much competition either. Bruce Johnson [Beach Boys] and I started a band while we were still in high school. In those days, admittedly, there were no rock 'n' roll bands. In high school, anybody who could play "Happy Birthday Pretty Baby" or "Tequila" was good. The only piano player that was good was Bruce. He is basically a terrific musician.

Bruce and myself, with a guy named Dave Schostac on saxophone, got together. In those days, all Dave did was honk on the saxophone. For that day and age, though, we had a fair rock 'n' roll band. In the meantime, the records I was listening to included an Ernie Freeman 78 called "Jivin' Around" and the other side was "Funny Face." There was something that was so solid. I didn't realize it at the time, but it was a carry-over from bebop. In my wildest imagination, little did I dream that one day I would be recording. under my own name, and using Ernie Freeman as the arranger and piano player. I used to take that record to parties, and that's the kind of group I wanted to have. Bruce was able to play "Jivin' Around." He could actually play a VII chord. It was really something in those days. I must say, I didn't even know what a backbeat was until I heard Little Richard and Fats Domino records.

RF: You've said that Earl Palmer was your biggest influence.

SN: That's right. In fact, when I heard Little Richard records, it never occurred to me that they were black musicians in New Orleans. In my mind, in those days in 1957, you'd hear people play on a record, and think of them with coats and ties in a



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In the meantime, Bruce, Dave, and I had this band. One day I got a call from Bruce saying that Kip Tyler was going to call. At that time, Kip Tyler had a band, the Flips, and they would back up the Art Laboe rock 'n' roll shows. Sure enough, Kip called. "Hello Sammy," he said. My name was Sammy then because I didn't like Sandy. I guess it was too feminine. He said we could start work immediately backing up the Art Laboe shows, and we did. That was really the big time in those days. Kip told us that he had to fire his present band, which was hysterical because he didn't fire them. They quit him to join Duane Eddy. When we went down to watch the band to get some ideas, I felt bad that these guys were going to be fired. The truth was that they were happy as anything to go on the road with Duane Eddy.

That summer we did the Art Laboe T.V. show. It was so strange, because going from the dressing room into the studio, all these girls would be screaming for our autographs and I didn't know how to handle that. I gained a lot of good experience backing up acts in those days.

Somewhere along there, before Kip Tyler, Bruce and I did some things with Jan and Arnie. [Arnie was replaced by Dean.] We did it in Jan's parents' garage.

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Jan could have anything he wanted, such as a real Ampex tape recorder and any record he wanted to buy. So we made a record, they took it to Arwin Records, and that was "Jenny Lee."

RF: Then you worked with Kip Tyler.

SN: That was over the summer of '58. When we quit Kip, Bruce somehow managed to land us a job in a small dive out in the Valley called Rocky's, along with a saxophone player named Bobby Ray. It was kind of fun playing my first nightclub job. Then Bobby Ray got a gig for us at $10 apiece at a recording studio. From that one session, I picked up a few other $10 or $12 sessions doing demos and records. One was "A Thousand Stars" with Cathy Young. I did one with Marvin and Johnny, and one with Sonny Knight. I did an album with Gene Vincent, but I was more or less on the bottom of the list of session men. I could have worked my way up if I had been more responsible and didn't have a hit record of my own, which spoiled me.

RF: How old were you when you did those first sessions?

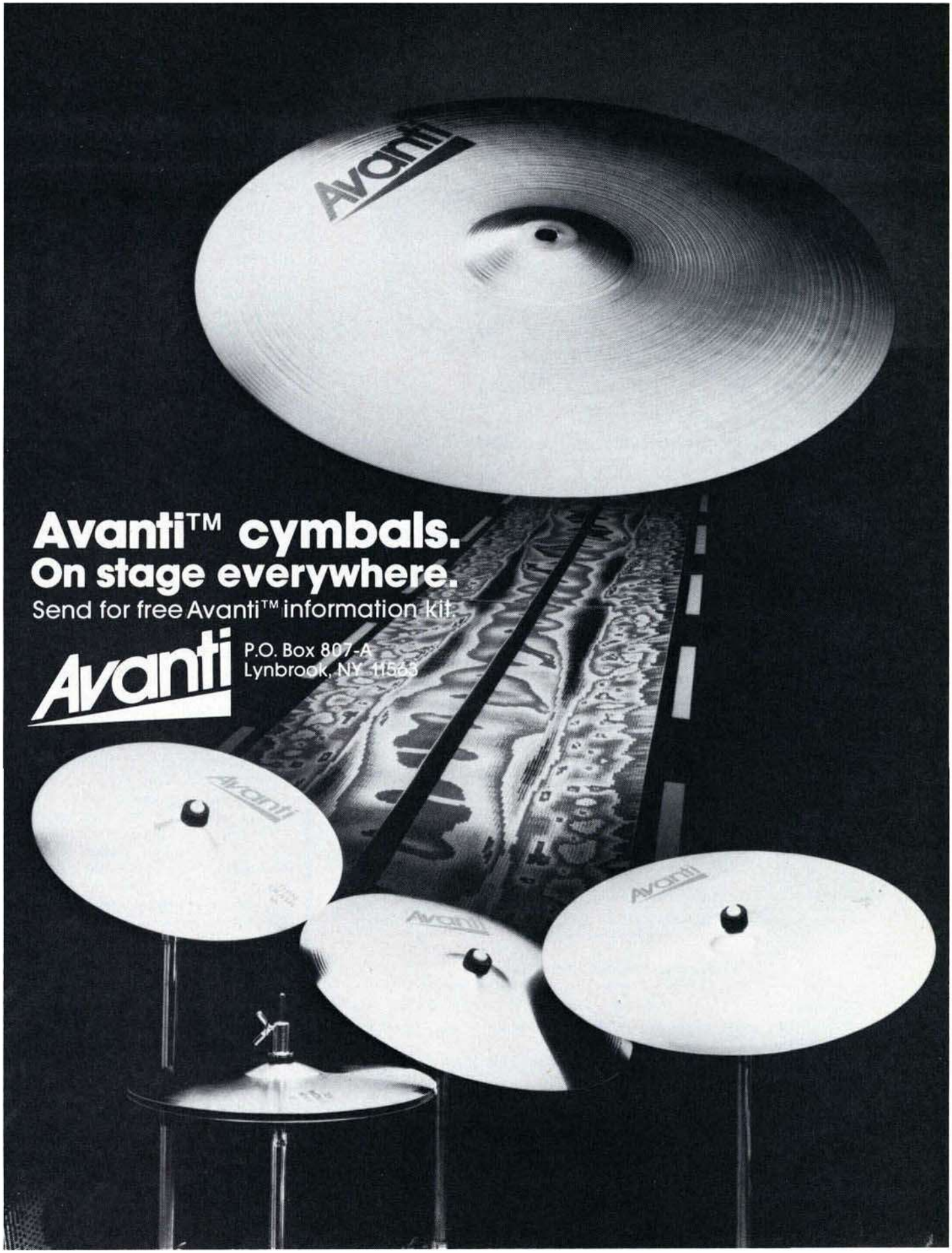
SN: At that time I was 18 going on 19. Bruce, Dave and I still did gigs around Southern California. Sometimes we'd use a guitar player who sang some Buddy Holly tunes kind of badly and his guitar was real loud. If the people at the gig would ask him to turn his guitar down, he'd say, "Rock 'n' roll is supposed to be loud," and he'd cuss them out, so we didn't use him anymore. That was Phil Spector. As a matter of fact, going back a bit, while we were still with Kip, we knew Phil and Phil hired me to do a demo session at Gold Star recording studios. That was "To Know Him Is To Love Him," which was actually the first record I was on that was a hit.

RF: What was it like hearing yourself on the radio?

SN: It was really fun. When Phil heard his record on the radio at the beach, he'd stand up on the blanket and yell, "That's me!"

RF: When did you start getting the idea to do your own thing?

SN: Well, actually, the idea to do a drum record came from a lot of different areas, like the strip drummer at the New Follies Burlesque and of course Cozy Cole's having a drum record. Another influence was a record called "Caravan." I think that was in the '40s because the drummer played a small tom, snare, and a floor tom. We used to play gigs, and I'd be doing the little Ralph Marterie-type beat mixed in with a beat that I heard on the back side of a hit record called "The Swag." I was playing this beat and the kids were dancing. I thought it was great just to play the drums and have them dance. That's where I wanted to go with drums, since I couldn't play anything like a solo in "Jumping At the Woodside" by Buddy Rich, which I used to listen to for hours on end. I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thought I wanted to play drums people could dance to, rock 'n' roll.

I banged around in my head to have a hit record, thinking, "Gee, everybody is having a hit record. Why don't I have one too? Then I won't have to do these recording sessions all over town." I had started doing more demo sessions and small sessions at Podlor's studio, which was actually, called American Recording Company. I was sort of their house drummer.

Bruce, Richie, and I did some records for American International Pictures. They had just started, and their gimmick was these teenage pictures like "Diary of a High School Bride." Matter of fact, I was on the title tune. I remember I got a nice drum sound. It was a good studio, and it was sort of like an Elvis Presley sound at that time. Bruce, Richie, and I went under the name of the Renegades and cut some records for American International. One was called "Geronimo" and one was "Charge," which got a little airplay in Bakersfield and Fresno.

One afternoon I was fiddling with the drums at Podlor's studio, and Kip came in. We were still friends, even though I wasn't working for him anymore. I remember playing this slowed-down Ralph Marterie beat. Kip started dancing around while I was playing, saying, "That's good, do that again." I did it and that's where the "Teen Beat" pattern started.

Ironically, when I really wanted to make up a track of "Teen Beat," Podlor's studio was booked, so I went to Western Recorders and made a little demo on acetate. I was happy with the sound. It was danceable and simple, a lot of open rolls and no guitar, just drums.

RF: So you built the song around the drums?

SN: Yes. I remember playing it for some publishers and some people that hung around Podlor's, and it didn't interest them to hear just drums. They thought it was boring. I thought of going to Art Laboe since he had had "Bongo Rock" by Preston Epps, and he liked the idea immediately. By that time, I had the title and he loved that too. He said we'd record it and two weeks later, we did at Podlor's studio with Richie on guitar, Bruce on piano, and myself. That's when Art had the genius idea to bring the record of "Battle of New Orleans" along so we could get the same feel and tempo.

After all these years, I can say now that the session would have ended up a big grotesque mess if it wasn't for Art's strong personality. Otherwise, Bruce and Richie would have taken over, and it would have ended up with a lot of guitar licks, real busy. It would have just turned into another bunch of guys renting a studio and going nowhere, with everybody wanting a piece of the pie.

You might say the actual guitar licks were written by Art. Art wanted a guitar

passage similar to "Bongo Rock." He just wanted some kind of 12-bar rock 'n' roll twangy guitar sound. Art would hum the 12-bar change to Richie and Richie would be all over the place. Art had to get him to play down. You might say that Art wrote the lick, but I imagine that Richie created the actual melody line. To this day, Richie has it in for me because he didn't get part songwriter's credit for "Teen Beat." At that point, though, I thought it would be another Renegades record, but a few weeks after we recorded it, I called Art about it and he said, "It's going to be *Sandy* Nelson. I said, "I don't want it to be Sandy. For one thing, a lot of people know me as Sam from playing around the L.A. area." He said that didn't mean anything, and if I had a national hit, that would wipe it all out. So, that was it.

RF: When did you get an album deal?

SN: Kip took me to Imperial Records. Due to the fact that I used to listen to Ernie Freeman records on Imperial, I thought I would like the label and that was my first artist's contract. We put out a few singles and one terrible album that Ernie Freeman actually played on. I was so nervous playing with him because I was playing some of his tunes. I really admired that man. That was a terrible album called *Teen Beat.* It's a collector's item. In fact, I make it more of a collector's item because I go out, buy copies, and destroy them. There are a few good cuts on there that were used in repackages years and years later though.

RF: When did you tour with the Ventures?

SN: That was in '61. I had already signed with Imperial and had several singles that didn't sell very well at all. The Ventures needed a drummer because their drummer, Howie Johnson, had had an accident. I thought, "Why not? I'll go on the road." We toured the Northwest and part of Nebraska. Bless their hearts, they're good guys, but they had counted on part of the gate and they lost their shirts on the tour. Then halfway through the tour, they decided to advertise me and that helped a little. One of the reasons it didn't work out for me and the Ventures, though, is because I was so into the New Orleans influenced drumming of Earl Palmer and how he plays his bass drum. They wanted a more white, what they called a "Susie-Q" beat, just a light 4/4 bass drum, and I wanted to really crack that downbeat. So that was one thing in disfavor of my being with the Ventures. Of course, it wasn't agreed that I would be their regular drummer anyway from the start.

RF: Didn't "Let There Be Drums" happen in '61?

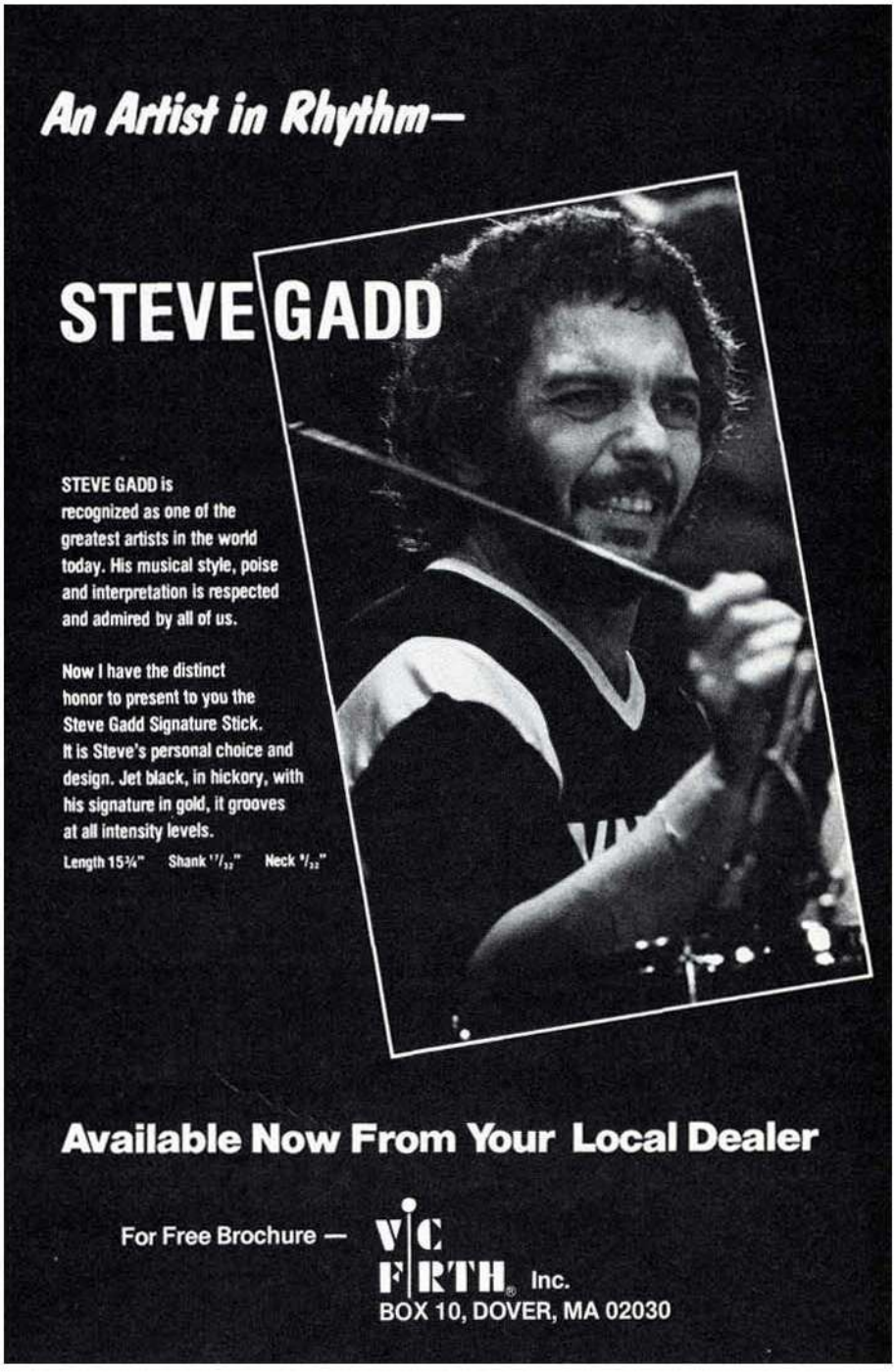
SN: Yes. You see, while I was on tour with the Ventures, I thought, "This isn't for me"—the snow, the chains, and the trailer rotting from the salt on the highway. I thought, "I've got to have one more hit record. Save me from this!" So, miraculously, the summer after the Ventures, I went into Podlor's studio with just the engineer, a guy named Tommy Coe. We fooled around with miking drums, a mic' on the bottom of the floor tom and a mic' on the top. We made a lot of wild tracks. I pieced them together and took it to Imperial. That was "Birth of the Beat" and "Let There Be Drums." I overdubbed Richie a few days later. He helped write the turnaround and, of course, put his unique type of musicianship on it. He got half writer's credit.

RF: To this day, I hear drummers say, "I'm trying to get a Sandy Nelson sound." What was that sound and what do you perceive as different about your sound?

SN: I didn't know about this "Sandy Nelson sound" at the time, consciously, but what I think it is is playing, say tom-toms. It is a matter of nuances or dynamics. I always tried to grab it on the first take, because you are loose and you can play with these dynamics, meaning loud and soft notes. The minute you tighten up mentally and physically, everything is going to be tight and loud.

RF: Were you muffling your drums any?

SN: Oh no. That's one of the reasons I don't like to record. I've had nightmares sitting there behind the drums and having some little 25-year-old engineer come out with a roll of duct tape. When I play now, I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RF: Did you just tune your drums by ear?

SN: Just instinctively. A lot of drummers even now tune them so they are not too high, and they sound like coffee cans. If it's too loose, it's just for the flap. I like the snare drum pretty tight. There again, I like the same muffler system to get that old 1930s ring, the rick-tick stuff, 8th notes played in triplet style or whatever. When I took lessons from Murray Spivak, I thought I invented some of that stuff, but it's the old saying, "the same old soup warmed over."

RF: When did you actually take lessons from Murray Spivak?

SN: In 1976, I spent a year with him. I had always wanted to take lessons from him ever since my father told me about him back in the '40s when Murray worked at Fox. One of the things that kept me from studying all those years was my drinking problems and the intimidation of being bad at math. In '76, I thought I was getting older. I wanted to study with him and get my hands loosened up. He said the same thing he said to a lot of drummers: "You guys kill me. You play for 20 or 25 years and then you come to me to get your hands in shape. I have to spend six months correcting your bad habits."

I have a little bit of a gripe with some drummers, where the school of thought is to not study and never practice; either you've got it or you don't. Maybe they can go through the rudiments kind of mechanically, but the actual playing of music, that's another story. I suspect that my figures are wrong, but I suspect that maybe 95% of the drummers that say they know the rudiments don't know how to play them.

RF: What had changed though? All your life you really didn't want to study and you didn't want to read. What did you get out of the learning experience that you hadn't had up to then?

SN: I would say that even going back to 1961, deep down in my mind I thought, "Some day I'm going to settle down, really learn this instrument, and really become a good musician." I had worked around and seen good studio players, which of course would intimidate me. I thought, "I'm going to be a good musician some day." It's never too late. It seemed that it happened right after all those years of making a lot of albums and being told what tunes to record, which I resented. I don't feel sour grapes about it. I'm very thankful for being in the recording business in the way that I have been. However, in '75 into '76, I bought this little house and I thought, "There is no reason not to study under Murray." I went down and introduced myself, and I've learned to love to practice. It's very soothing. I almost get into a form of meditation and go into a fantasy world. Studying and practicing are wonderful. This has probably been written up a thousand times in your magazine, but you've got to learn to separate that from the actual playing of music. You can't be thinking of exercises or "I'm going to wow them with this," because then you're really not playing. Half the time I'm holding the sticks all wrong with the fingers curled way under on the left hand, matched grip style. I never thought I would be playing any kind of jazz or big band type things.

RF: Is that what you're doing now?

SN: Not with the big bands, but with a marvellous piano player who I've learned to really appreciate and have become close to, Dick Leslie. It's opened up a whole new world of colors, because I thought I would be sentenced to a life of being a mediocre rock player and beating some good licks on a tom-tom for the rest of my life.

RF: You've been using a Ludwig set with a Gretsch bass drum, is that right?

SN: That's what I do now when I play with Dick.

RF: What were you using back then?

SN: Actually, the same set I'm using now. A Ludwig 13" and 16" with heads on both sides. I've gone to a Yamaha snare, steel shelled.

RF: Why do you use a Gretsch bass drum and Ludwig toms?

SN: The situations I've been playing in have been either rectangular or half round piano bars, and you've got to have something with punch to get out from there. I like the Gretsch. I'm not too much into the technical, mechanical aspects of drums. I learned something about cymbals from my old friend, Bob Yeager. It was ignorant bliss on my part. About 20 years ago, I went in and said, "I want a medium ride, about 19" or so." He said, "You don't want to try it out?" I said, "What would I want to try it out for? I'll trust you. Just give me a medium that doesn't have too gongy or too ticky of a sound." He said, "You know something? You're smart. Most of these guys come in here behind the counter, put the glove on, try out cymbals all day long, and drive me crazy." He said it's like trying out speakers which are going to sound different in every room. I still have those cymbals.

RF: Which cymbals do you use?

SN: Zildjian. I use two 17" for ride and crash, a 19" medium ride, a 15" or 16" Chinese, and a small splash about 14", high up on the same stand as the Chinese cymbal.

RF: Did you ever take your own group out on the road?

SN: I used to go out on the road with just a guitar player, Don Miller, and myself. We'd do exciting gigs in places like Bakersfield, Fresno, and Oxnard. That was in '61.

In '63 I had a nice little band. We did some Ray Charles and James Brown things. At that time, the kids in the Midwest hadn't really heard of any black music to speak of, so with our little crew cuts

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and tight pants, we had a good tour. It was a very rough tour, though, and it made me never want to tour again. My car blew up three times, and that gave me grey hair when I was only 24 years old. Strangely enough, I had a nice band in 1968 and '69, but being in my own band interfered with my drinking, so I quit my own band.

RF: When was your accident, Sandy?

SN: That was in April of '63. I was on a small motorcycle. I tangled with a school bus and lost my right foot. I've trained my left foot, over the last years, into a better bass drum technique. Of course, during the accident, in the hospital, I never thought I'd play again.

RF: What made you play again? A lot of people would have felt defeated at that point.

SN: When I got out of the hospital, I still had a lot of record royalties coming in on "Let There Be Drums" and some other albums. I was, you might say, semi-rich. I bought a house and a boat in Marina del Rey. I was still doing albums, but I have to admit, it was a sluff-off deal. I didn't enjoy the music they were handing me. There were some good moments, though, on some of those sessions, but I even had some hate mail, like "How dare you put out such vomit! It's not even good enough for *Muzak."* I'd always say to myself, "It's the last album I'm going to do like this. From now on, I'm just going to do the old home-spun Sandy Nelson stuff." However, due to the waving under my nose of advances from the company, I'd say, "Well, I'll just do this one more time." I did bring drum solos down from my garage studio on the old three track and put them in the albums, which appeared quite frequently. I brought one of those drum solos to a mastering session after we completed an album, but the producer from Liberty said, "We don't want to bother putting that in. Let's just put out an 11-tune album. I want to go home." He started putting on his coat. I pushed him up against the wall, made a fist, said, "This is going in the album," and it went in the album.

RF: What gave you the optimism to continue playing after your accident?

SN: I don't think I ever really thought about it that much, to be honest. I thought I might have to have a special house with handrails, never dreaming that I would be handling a little cabin cruiser all by myself one or two years later. I guess that's human nature. When something traumatic happens, you don't see any way out of it. It doesn't take as long as people think to train your other hand or foot. Like when you go into a kitchen, you reach for that handle on the cupboard with that same hand. Reverse it and it only takes a few days to get used to that. That wasn't really too much of a problem switching to the left foot on the bass drum.

RF: What about the hi-hat?

SN: Until seven years ago, I was just using

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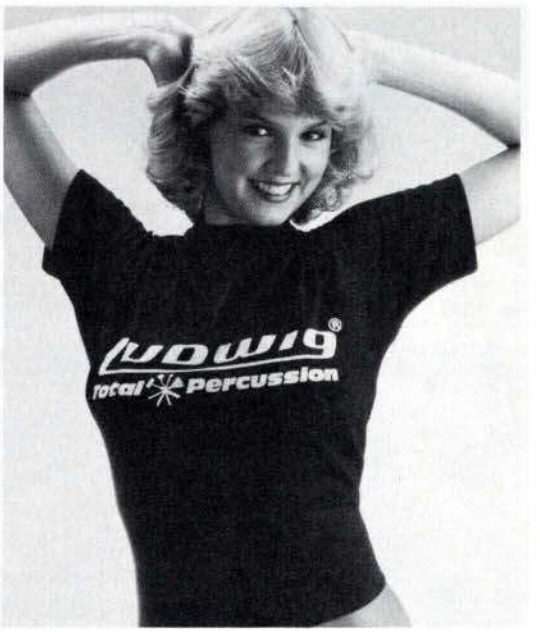

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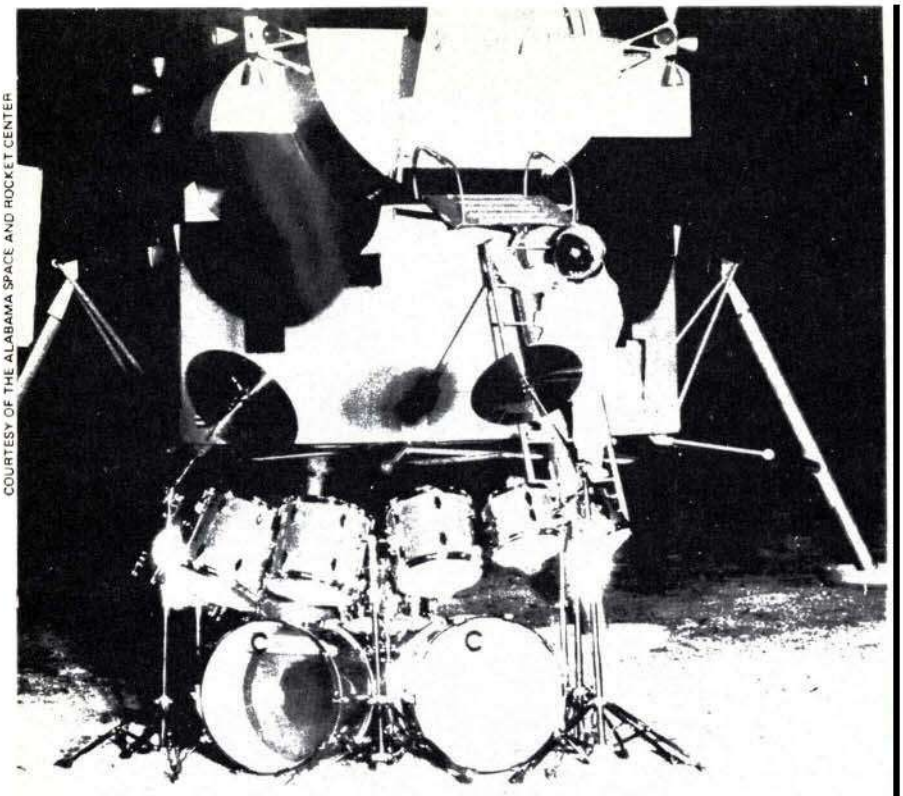

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a closed hi-hat. I was looking at the hi-hat, though, and thought, "God, I've got an artificial foot here. I can move it up and down." So I put a board under the floor tom, taped it to the hi-hat foot pedal, and for the last six or seven years, I've been developing a technique with that. It's working out great.

RF: I take it then, from what you've been saying, that there really wasn't any bitterness after the accident.

SN: I don't know if this is the place to get into it, but I think the way it works is your subconscious doesn't accept losing a foot or limb, but finally the subconscious catches us. What I'm leading up to is just one simple word: acceptance. With anything traumatic in your life, you go through certain stages. The first is denial and the final one is acceptance.

RF: Why do you think that drum records were and are so scarce? Why do you think yours were so successful?

SN: There certainly was a scarcity. I don't know, but a lot of companies don't like drum solos. They think they're boring. They sound so medicinal in an office in a recording company. It would be nice to think it's what I was saying earlier about the dynamics and nuances on the tom-toms, the loud and soft beats. It would be a nice neat package for me to say that's why my records sold better than others, but that may be a little too egocentric or oversimplified. With "Teen Beat," I hit it just right. I had a good title and it was something of a novelty. Of course right after it was on the charts, people in the recording business said, "You had a lot of luck. It could never happen again." Then it happended again with "Let There Be Drums." "Let There Be Drums" was a lot like Cozy Cole's playing, which is ironic because he tried to do "Let There Be Drums." He should have done an imitation of his "Topsy." It would have come off better. He was trying to do an imitation of Sandy Nelson, which is like 10 sheets of carbon paper.

RF: You're teaching now. What kinds of things do you stress?

SN: Like a lot of teachers, I try to go through curriculum similar to Murray Spivak's. I think sometimes I learn more teaching than my students learn from me. Say it's a fairly young person. I have to decide whether to give him what I call the "bartender filling in for the drummer who didn't show up" type lessons or start with good technique with the sticks and the open roll, the up and down stroke, etc. I have to figure out how much of both to give him. It's really an art to try to give him both. It depends a lot on the experience and the age. There's a little five-year-old kid named Josh who I've been coaching, and he shows a lot of promise because he started out with a little toy set. It's so cute, because he was really listening to the music and knew what he was after. He plays with

his mother who plays piano, and at five years old, he actually is starting to understand the difference between a swing rhythm and a rock beat. The one thing I learned from him is that, with a youngster like that, you've got to make the lessons fun. About a half hour into the last time I saw him, I started kidding around with him and making jokes. He said to his mother in the kitchen, "Can I keep on going with this? It's getting to be fun." That really taught me a lot. Of course, that is the problem with reaching kids.

RF: So tell me, after 35 some-odd albums, what now?

SN: For the first time in a long, long time, I've felt in control of my life. I love to study and practice. By some miracle, I actually set out to accomplish a few things in drumming in succession, and I have to admit, it's working out. For the first time in my life, I've actually started something that I'm continuing with. Of course, you don't know where the finish is. For example, in '76, I studied with Murray to become a better reader, get the hands in good shape, and learn what the rudiments are all about really. The next step was to just sort of casually practice those things for a year, start to more and more get on the set, and develop the playing between the bass drum, snare drum, etc., as opposed to just sitting there playing exercises with 1,2,3,4 on the bass drum. Instead of buying books on what to practice, I like to invent things myself.

This phase I'm in now is just really understanding the set of drums, and the actual playing of independence and such, as for example, in the article in your magazine on using the book *Stick Control* between the bass drum, snare drum, and the ride cymbal. What this is leading up to is improving my musicianship, and it's fun. It's invigorating. I don't know where it's all going to lead to. Maybe I'll just end up playing in Plummer Park when I'm 70 years old with some people in an orchestra or something, or maybe I'll end up with my own little jazz club or something, with orange crates on the walls and oysters on the half shell. I don't really know where it's going to go, but it's fun becoming a better musician.

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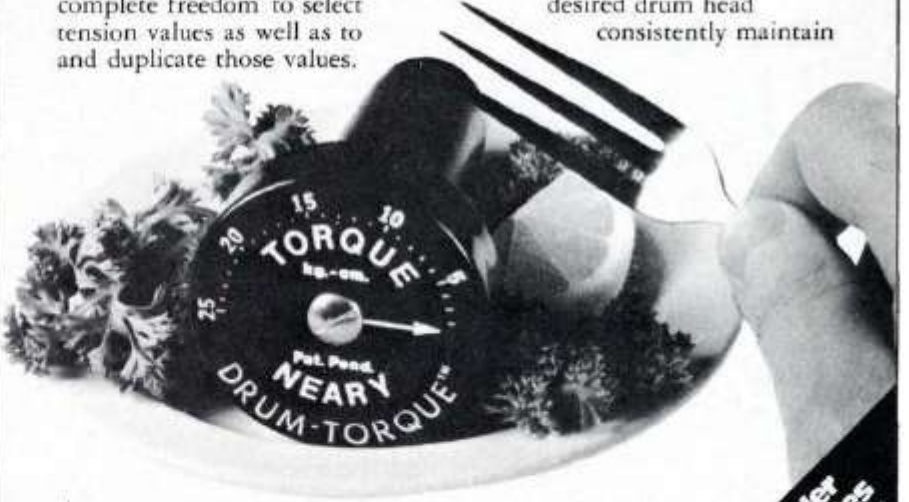

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by Bobby Bank

Alan Schwartzberg

Photo by Bobby Bank

BB: Where and when did you first hear drums?
AS: I was ten years old and on my way home from school in the Bronx. I passed a house and heard a drummer playing a Gene Krupa/Cozy Cole-like solo. I froze in my tracks. It was one of two mystical things that have happened to me in my life. It was as though someone reached in and lit the pilot light inside of me. The other, by the way, was meeting my wife, Susan.
BB: When did you first hit a drum?
AS: I finally conned my folks into drum lessons, and when I was 13 years old, they got me a set of Gretsch Blue Pearl. It was a somber day for the neighbors in my building.
BB: What music and drummers did you listen to?
AS: Somehow I went from Gene Krupa directly to Max Roach, especially the rich musical sound of his drums. I copied every solo, note for note. At my peak, I was practicing eight hours a day, and falling asleep at night listening to Symphony Sid's jazz show.
BB: This was while you were taking lessons?
AS: Yes, from Sam Ulano, a strong personality who would embarrass me into practicing. Later on, I attended Manhattan School of Music and studied percussion with Morris Goldenberg. I taught myself piano, which was the finish of my formal training.
BB: Who were some of your other influences?
AS: Philly Joe Jones, Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, and Pete LaRoca.
BB: It seems like you only listened to black drummers. Did you hear anything from them that you didn't hear from other drummers?
AS: It's not racial. It just seems that the ones I liked happened to have that color skin. Later, as my musical scope expanded, I appreciated different style drummers, like Roger Hawkins, Paul Motian with Bill Evans, Jim Keltner, and, of course, as we all have to admit, Bernard Purdie.
BB: What makes a good teacher?
AS: I believe you have to learn kind of by yourself. Watching and listening to great drummers can show you what's possible.
BB: What were your first jobs
AS: My first gigs were in the Catskill Mountain resorts, playing in the show bands, and sight reading charts for singers, dancers, etc. They were great experiences which taught me how to look at drum parts and find out what they really meant. These charts are not very different from charts I see in the studios today. They're just a guideline. They tell you how long the music is, where it goes, where it stops, and where the important accents and cuts are. The rest is all up to you. It's your interpretation of it that makes you different from another drummer.
BB: After the Catskills, then what?
AS: I started working in small jazz clubs around town. I worked a lot at the Half Note Cafe with guys like Jim Hall, Ron Carter, Jimmy Rushing, and Al Cohn & Zoot Sims. My bebop career peaked when I got the gig with Stan Getz. Jack DeJohnette was the drummer with Stan at the time, and he couldn't make this gig at Ronnie Scott's club in London. I auditioned with a couple of other drummers at Stan's mansion in Rye, New York, scared to death. The other drummers were playing great, but very hip and outside. I played straight because Stan was playing swing style. Today, I try to play for the artist and for what the situation calls for, not for drummers checking you out.
BB: Was it around this time that you made a sharp left away from jazz?
AS: I started listening to and loving the music of James Brown, Aretha, and The Beatles. I was working a gig with a bass player named Don Payne, who introduced me to jingle and record people. The studio life seemed ideal to me. I wouldn't get bored; I could play all different types of music and earn a great living.
BB: How were you able to break into the studio scene?
AS: I noticed back then that drummers would sit down at studio drums and just play. I'd tune them and retune them to each musical situation. The engineers appreciated it. I'd focus my energy on every little demo I did, even the dumbest ones. I'd concentrate to make the drums right and listen to playbacks to perfect it. The producers appreciated that. Eventually, you get a reputation and recommendations to work for new people. The only other way I know to crack the studio scene is to have a brother who's a producer or to have your father own a recording studio.
BB: Tell me the story about Mountain with Felix Pappalardi and Leslie West.
AS: It was an important moment in my career. Studio musicians were accused of not being "authentic." It can be true. I knew I had to play some real rock 'n' roll. I met Felix on a session for Maggie Bell. We got along great. He asked me to do a Japanese tour with Mountain, then the loudest band in North America. Felix and Leslie had 12 amps apiece. We toured Hawaii and Japan, did an album called *Twin Peaks,* and every note I played was as loud and as hard as I could play. It was a learning experience that taught me about playing simple.
BB: What other road things did you do?
AS: I did a B.J. Thomas tour, good country playing experience; a Herbie Mann tour; a band called Dreams; Pat Travers; and best of all, a three-month tour with Peter Gabriel. It was a great band with Robert Fripp, Tony Levin, Larry Fast, and Jimmy Maelin. I miss that. There's really nothing like walking on a stage, hearing that sound, and doing only one take.
BB: Back to the studio work. What's your drumset like?
AS: Basically, I like three rack toms: 10", 12", 13" with double heads, of course, and a 16" floor tom; watery cymbals, 18" and 20". My bass drum pedal is most important to me. It's an old Camco bicycle-chain type.
BB: Is it true you don't use your own drums on sessions?
AS: True. I enjoy playing on different equipment set up differently. When the drums aren't always in the same spot and don't look the same, I think it helps spontaneity.
BB: Don't you ever run into bad drumkits?
AS: Unless it's missing vital parts or the skins are beat to death, you can tune any drum and get a good sound. One time, while waiting for a drum rental to arrive on a Tony Orlando session, we ran the song down with a bass drum, hi-hat, and some

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cardboard boxes. It felt and sounded great. Then the drums came, and soon we went back to playing on the boxes. The microphones just hear; they can't see.

BB: Give me some more examples of your experimentation.

AS: Occasionally, I'll tune the high tom all the way up like a timbale and play an unexpected high-pitched Latin fill. I've hit ashtrays. On a Nils Lofgren album, I put an empty Heineken bottle on the hi-hat rod and used it as a kind of wood block. I've stuck a music stand between the hi-hat cymbals to make a distortion sound.

BB: What about sticks?

AS: I love Vic Firth *Generals.* They're big classical sticks that aren't heavy, but are made of sturdy wood and somehow seem to get a bigger sound.

BB: What about your grip?

AS: I changed to matched grip, which I use for everything except bebop and snare rolls.

BB: What makes a good studio?

AS: The overall feeling of the room. Even where it's located in town has something to do with the mysterious reason one studio sounds better than another. Obviously, the engineer is the most important factor. An efficient cue system helps a lot. Studios like Blue Rock, my personal favorite, Power Station, Hit Factory, and Media all have these elements.

BB: Obviously, you have to have a rapport with engineers.

AS: I try to. I'm not shy in the studios. Engineers, producers, and musicians know that drums are key to the sound and feel of most records. If something doesn't sound right in the cue system, or a seemingly insignificant thing like the lights being a bit too bright, I'm not afraid to ask for a change.

BB: Today, they're using a lot of electronics. How do you feel about it?

AS: A couple of years ago, I bought Syndrums when they first came out. They were fun. Now they make nice end-tables! I'm only kidding about them being passe; they'll probably be back next year in the '80s wave of nostalgia.

BB: The Linn Machine is another story, isn't it?

AS: The Linn Machine is absolutely ingenious, but I think, without a human being overdubbing something, a Linn track has the stiffness of canned laughter. It's the greatest tool for composers.

BB: Doesn't this machine eliminate some of your work?

AS: Absolutely. It's cheaper, doesn't drink, and always comes on time. I must say after speaking to Steve Schaeffer—the West Coast studio cat—it's my understanding that they've made advances and improvements on the Linn so it can actually sound like the time feel is human. I wonder if it's too late to go to medical school?

BB: What about Simmons drums?

AS: They absolutely knocked me out. You can get almost any natural or electronically enhanced sound.

BB: Isn't the current trend electronics?

AS: Yes. It's difficult sometimes, but you have to remain open. There were musicians who didn't want to recognize the electric bass. They're called "old guys."

BB: What's your opinion of your contemporaries, like Steve Gadd?

AS: Steve's great. When he first came into town, I recommended him to do some dates. I stopped doing that when they didn't call me back.

BB: How is he different?

AS: His technique is fantastic. He's a drummer's drummer; a true star. I'm more like a character actor—believable in different roles.

BB: What about Ringo?

AS: He was part of a band that is still sacred. He's not the world's greatest rock 'n' roll drummer, as he has stated. He has a nice childlike quality in his playing.

BB: What do you think of "good musician" bands like Toto?

AS: Fantastic. Being in a band like Toto is the closest thing to becoming a member of a championship baseball team. I'm also embarrassed for New York City that we never came up with a band like that. I once did some two-drummer stuff with Jeff Porcaro on an Elliot Randall album. He killed me. He might be the best one out there.

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BB: I know you don't teach. If you did, what would you teach?
AS: I might work on the psychological part of drumming—conceptualizing drum parts; The "Fear of Filling."
BB: I know you do many jingles. What is that scene like?
AS: It's a highly developed craft. Musicians are the best on every instrument, including virtuoso string players, not to mention great players like John Tropea, Dave Spinozza, Neil Jason, Will Lee, Jimmy Maelin, Paul Schaeffer, and The Blues Brothers Band. I feel proud to be there. The rapport is wonderful. It's kind of like an exclusive club—and the bread's not bad!
BB: How does the residual and payment situation work?
AS: One 60-second piece of music can be broken up into 12 separate spots. They're allowed three per session. That means, you could get paid four times. If they put it on radio and TV, double that. The highly developed craft business I mentioned before refers to the very short amount of time we have to make this music sound good.
BB: I've seen a lot of gold records on your wall. What have been some of your more memorable moments in record cutting?
AS: I might as well start with James Brown. Having him accept me and answer the question, "Is it possible to play funky even though you were Bar Mitzvahed?" Working three weeks on basic tracks for Peter Gabriel's solo album with genius producer, Bob Ezrin. Working with Harry Chapin on "Cats in the Cradle," which we tried every way but a merengue. Coming up with the beat for Gloria Gaynor's "Never Can Say Goodbye," considered the first disco record (may God forgive me), Brian Ferry's Roxy Music album, Kiss solo albums, Alice Cooper albums, Barbra Streisand, Neil Sedaka with George Martin producing, Meco Star Wars, and of course, the thrill of my first hits with Tony Orlando.
BB: What about your work with Jimi Hendrix?
AS: I met him four years before he died. I was working with Mose Allison opposite Jimi. He sounded me about getting together to play. I thought he was slightly spaced. He was playing ridiculously loud, but there was something there. I realized who he was years later. I did the albums *Crash Landing* and *Midnight Lightning,* which were done postmortem. This probably wasn't the kind of "getting together" that Jimi had in mind. The multi-tracks were stripped down to just guitar and voice. The time was so elastic that no two bars were the same length. It was a great challenge.
BB: What do you see in the future for yourself?
AS: To keep playing, and maybe someday sound like that guy I hear playing in my dreams.

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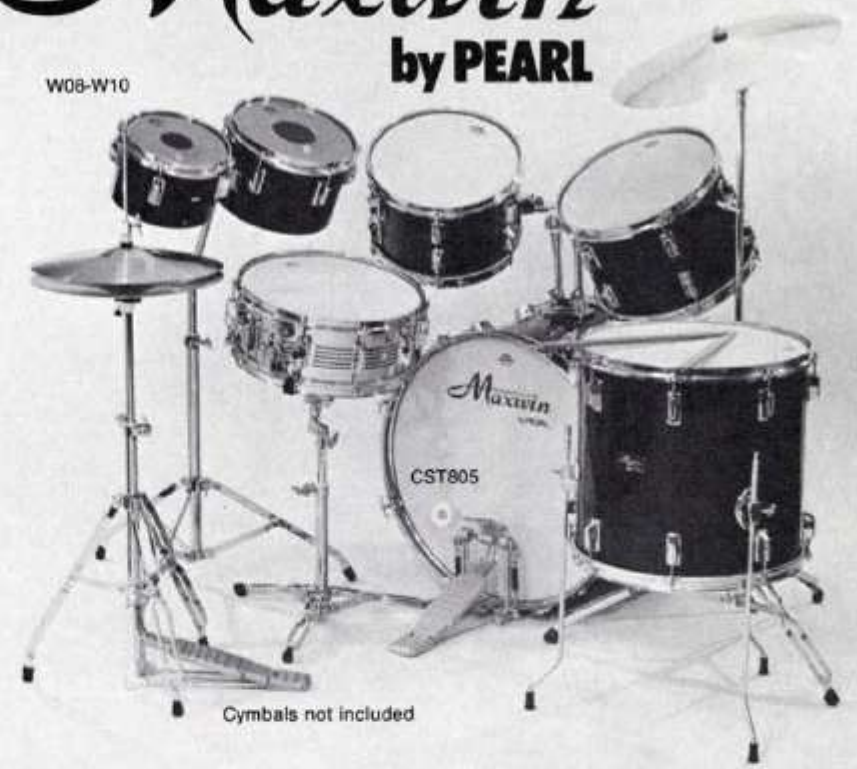

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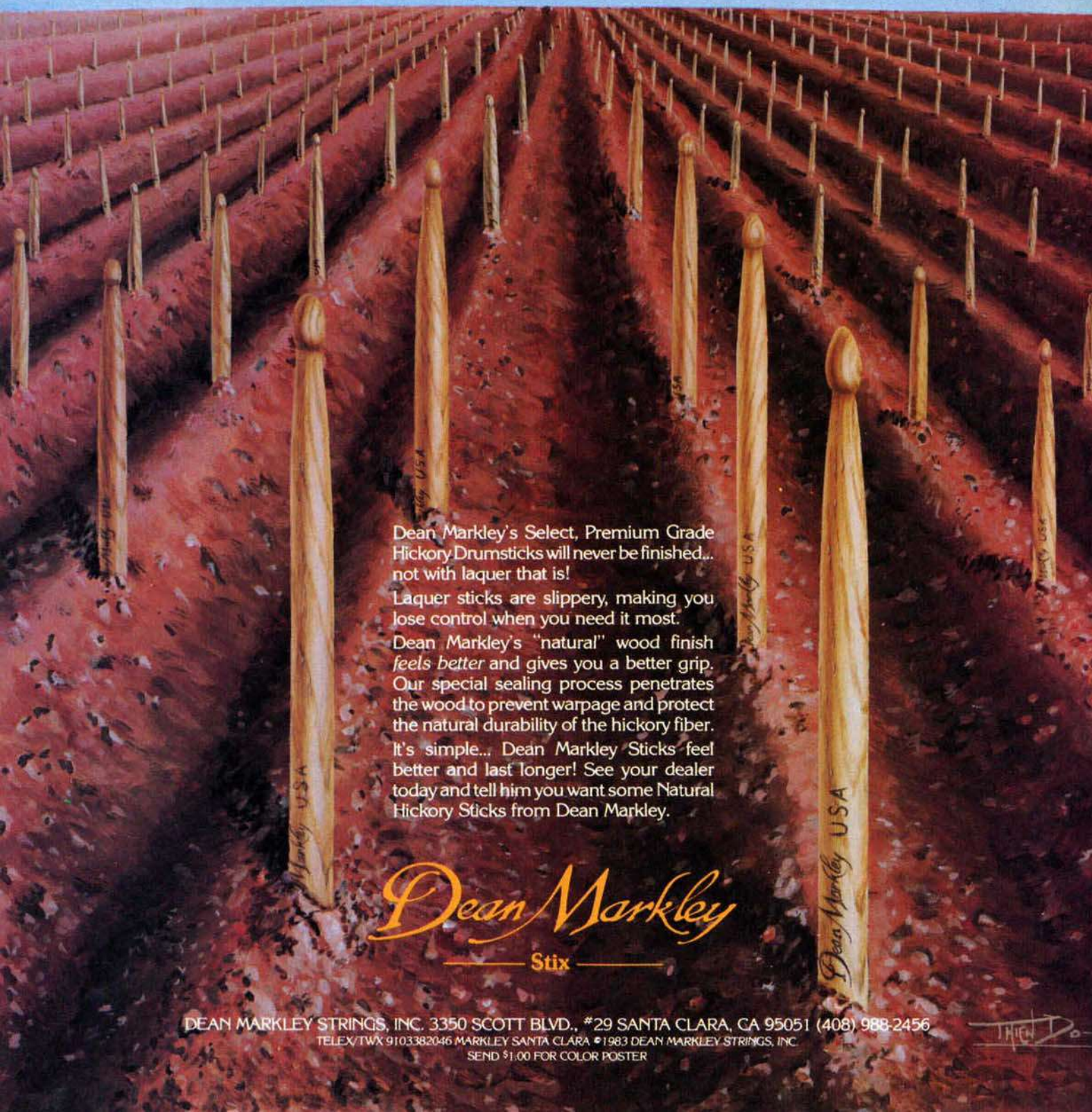

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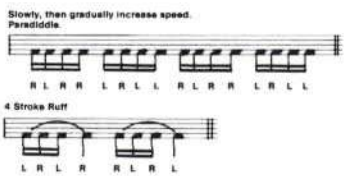

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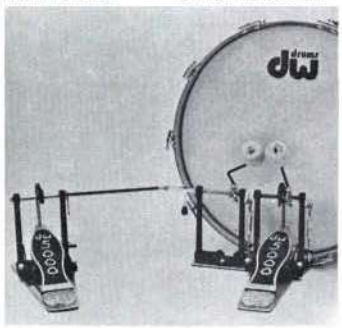

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Photo by Lewis Lee

***Collins** continued from page 12*

uses, but on this tour we talked about whether it should be concert toms or it should be double-headed drums. Because of the kind of music that I'm writing, it made sense for his to have a warmer sound. With Genesis, though, I think I'd rather see him using concert toms again because they cut and they've got a bite and a bark to them.

"I do a lot of gigs with John Martyn and that music is a lot looser. It's a lot more jazz than anything else, so I'll use a softer thing. You want to have a bit of feedback from the drum. More often, I'll use double-headed drums than if I'm playing with Robert Plant where I'll use something that's really heavy. I believe there are different things for different occasions.

"But, at the moment, I generally use single-headed drums, which I didn't think I'd ever like to do. Ten years ago, I was a double-headed drummer. But, in the last few years, it's been mainly single headed, especially in the studio.

"I believe Bill Bruford's comment he made years ago to me was, there's no point in me getting a new drumkit because I'll only sound the same as I do on this one, just as he sounds the same on any drumkit that he touches. And, to a large extent, that's true."

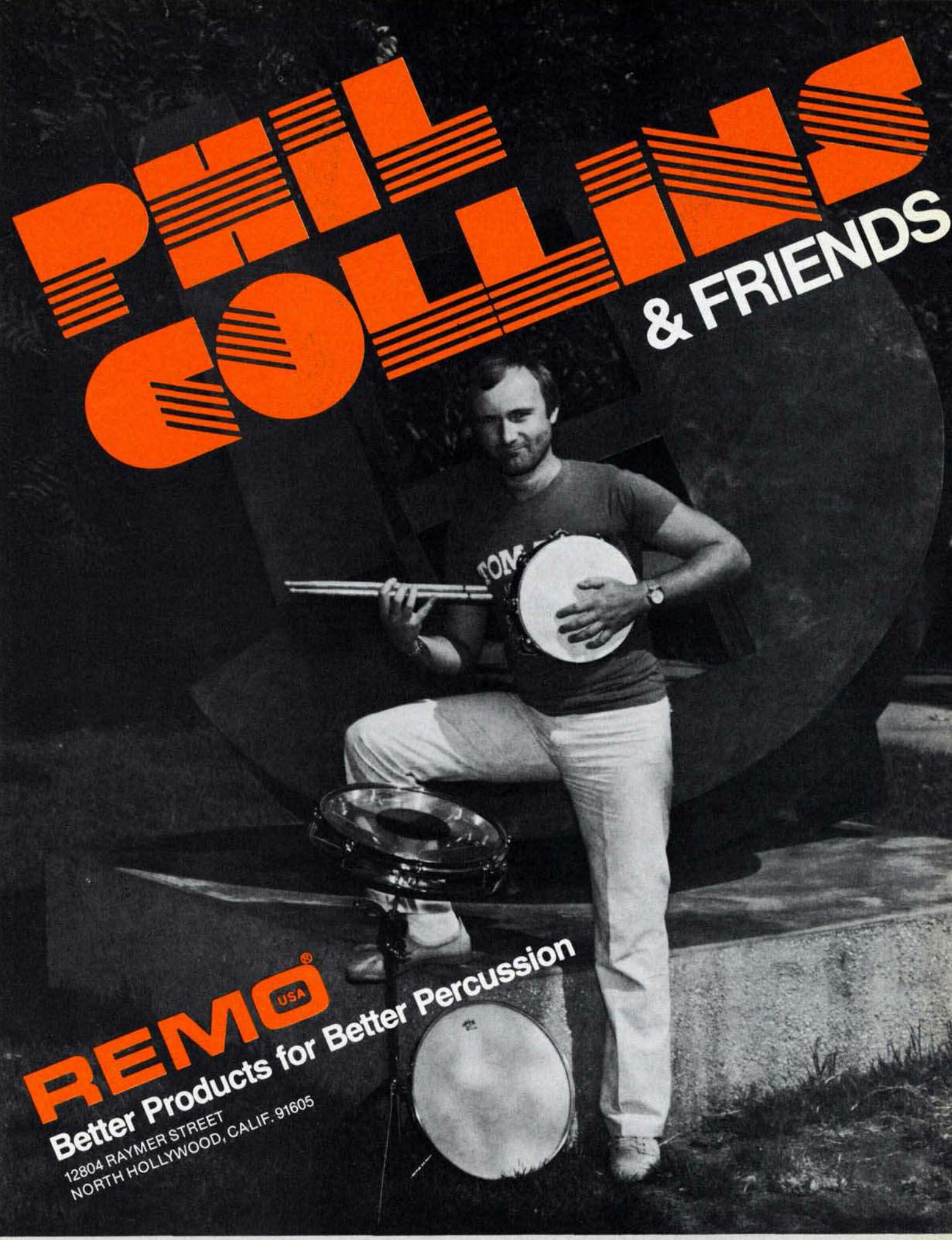
Years ago, when Phil was touring with Genesis, it looked as though his hi-hat was sitting in the middle of his kit. He clarified, "I used to use eight tom-toms, you see, six on the top and two on the bottom. I was doing so much singing with Genesis that I felt a bit ostentatious having all these drums. Also, with the early Genesis, I used to have four timbales on my right. Although I was sitting at a regular drumkit, with four timbales, from the audience it looked like I was sitting amongst a whole lot of drums and my hi-hat was in the middle. Eventually I removed a couple of the middle-sized drums, a 13" and a 15", so that I just went 8" to 10", 12" to 14", and 16" to 18". It covered the same area, but didn't look quite as ostentatious. For someone like Chester, you know, with two bass drums and about 15 toms, that's fine because he plays them all night."

Phil worries that with his recent success as a singer, people may tend to forget that he is a drummer first and foremost. "Whatever else I am, I'm a drummer first," he says. "I've been playing since I was five and my ambition was to be respected by other musicians, not to be wealthy or to be successful. I mean, that was nice, too, if it was going to happen. But, it was really to be respected by other musicians who say, 'I like what you're doing.'

"I think that the actual singing and writing has affected my attitude towards what the drums should be doing. But, I was getting into that even before Peter left, really. I was just realizing that some of the songs that Genesis did should have a straight thing behind them instead of me flailing around the kit out of context. I was just trying to add a color to the music in the same way that keyboards add color.

"I think that I sing like a drummer. I sing the words much more rhythmically than a singer does. There's a song that Genesis did called 'In the Cage.' The lyrics are almost irrelevant to the backing track. Having not heard the original version in such a long time, when we actually came 'round to doing it, I treated each word like a percussive thing so that it all fit in with the percussive track. I think the singing of it has changed to fit in with the drum—with the rhythmic side of it—rather than the other way around."

I asked Phil to describe his playing style. "I've never really seen me. I've seen the Genesis videos which are usually with me standing out front. I watched the show on video last night and I ran back a couple of



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times when I did the solo. It was like 45 seconds to a minute, because I'm not a solo man at all. I was quite surprised as to how together it looked. I mean, I sit there and my *arms* move, but / don't, as opposed to some drummers with body movement and all that. Bruford, I think, always looks good when he plays. He seems aware of his sitting position.

"I used to say in the old days that if the power stopped, I should be doing something interesting enough for people to listen to until the power came back on. That's not to say something that's complicated, but just something that's got some kind of essence to it, whether it's just a straight Zeppelin-type four-to-the-bar thing, or whatever, that should be just right musically for it to carry itself.

"My playing has changed an awful lot in the last two or three years, I think. Even on something like the encore tune on my tour which was called, 'And So To F," which is a Brand X tune. That's in nine, but rather than trying to do as much as I can in nine, I tend to try to get some kind of motion down with the thing. I think of it as adding the musical thing to the tune, as opposed to just a rhythmic content. I suppose everybody thinks they do that, but a long time ago I stopped throwing myself around the drumkit to impress. When you start to groove, it should just be there.

"When I first saw Simon Phillips years and years ago, he sat like Billy Cobham; he played like Billy Cobham. He bounced up and down like Cobham when he played and he stood up and went around his tomtoms like Billy Cobham. But, he did it in the tunes that really didn't call for it at all. Even Cobham was doing that when I saw him with George Duke and Alphonso Johnson, and the audience would get up and applaud. But, I mean, that's not the point. Playing that way just occasionally is more in keeping with what the tune is and it's something you can't buy. You have to just learn. Now, of course, Simon is playing beautifully.

"Genesis helped me a lot in that respect because we've always played tunes, you know. Therefore, we're playing something like 'Squonk' one minute, which is really me in my John Bonham hat, and the next minute we're playing something like 'Los Endos,' which is me in my Airto hat. So, it's constantly changing styles to fit the tune and trying to do something a bit more musical than just doing everything on every tune. And nowadays you get stuff like 'Intruder,' which is ten minutes of exactly the same thing. That, to me, is harder to do and is much more interesting to listen to than ten minutes of a fusion piece with everybody flailing around the drumkit. It has something else to offer. I'm more into that, I think, than anything else now.

"The reason I'm never ashamed or embarrassed to admit that I put on a Keith Moon hat for a couple of tunes or a John Bonham hat for certain things is purely because, I think, I've been playing such a long time that my personality as a player is pretty well established. No matter what my influence is, it still comes out sounding a little bit like me, I hope. There is stuff like 'Thru These Walls' on my album, which is pure Ringo's 'Strawberry Fields Forever' period. You know, all those little drags . . . 'da, da, da, dit, dit, doom, doom, dom, doom, doom, Let me take you down . . .' and I still sound like me. Maybe people don't think that I listen to Ringo."

In our last interview with Phil, he said that he didn't play solos. I asked him about the philosophy behind that. "I'm not very good at it," he replied. "There's this tune called 'The West Side,' which is an ensemble piece, really. Pete Robinson said to me, 'You should stretch out a little bit. It's a great vehicle.' I'm saying, 'Peter, I can't do that. I'm not capable of doing it." He said, 'Well, try it.' It wasn't a question of everyone stopping and me doing a solo, you know, 'Lights on Phil.' Everybody was just cruisin' and then just came back in. I sort of soloed over the tune, which is what I did with Brand X on a track called 'Nuclear Burn.' Robin held a chord and it was just an interlude which could be as long or as short as it felt at the moment of time. But, I'm really pleased now that Pete pushed me into it because it ain't bad, actually.

"What I don't like, and what bores me stiff with any kind of solos, are the cliches. When I saw Bonham play before he joined Led Zeppelin, he did a solo and it was the first solo I've ever stood up for and applauded. He was wonderful. He was doing all the crossover stuff with his hands; no sticks! It was very new then. He used to be a bricklayer, so his hands were as hard as rocks. He was doing all this stuff, and triplets on the bass drum, and I couldn't believe it.

"Buddy Rich is still one of the masters. When he does a fill; perfect, you know. No matter what you like or don't like about Buddy Rich, there's still something there that is definitive of its time.

"But it's so bloody boring to see someone just doing rolls with the bass drum, or throwing a stick up and catching it, or things like that, you know. It's so predictable. No matter how good the solo, it's predictable that you start there and it's going to get to there. You're disappointed because they don't realize how predictable it is, either. It's pandering to the masses, really. Kids like to see it, but they're not going to want anything better unless you give them something better. I can watch Tony Williams do a drum solo because it will blow me away. Either you got it or you ain't. That's what it boils down to.

"There's never been a place in a Genesis show for a drum solo, apart from when the equipment's broken down, and even then, I used to sort of think of a one-handed

drum solo, which was '.shhh-chh-chh-shhh' with the hi-hat. That was all. Peter would say, 'And now we have the wonderful, one-handed drum solo. Notice how he does this all with one hand.' That was all there was. It's not a solo, obviously. It was like a parody on the drum solo because there was absolutely nothing going on, but people would still watch it.

"I'm not knocking it because I'll never be good at it. Occasionally, it's great to see Billy Cobham or Buddy Rich. But, rock 'n' roll solos as such, especially the drummers with six tom-toms and two bass drums . . . It should be enough in the music. If you can't do what you can do in the music, then you're playing the wrong kind of music anyway. I still stand by the concept that if you've got to play four all night, that's what you should do. Then, don't have a 20-minute drum solo where you suddenly take all your clothes off and live. That's why I don't do drum solos."

In Chester Thompson's interview (January, 1983, MD), he said that Phil played like an American, but with an English interpretation. Collins commented, "Well, it works the other way around, you see? I don't like a lot of English music. When I tried to find an English drummer after Bill Bruford left Genesis, I was really stuck for someone to play with. I bought a whole bunch of albums by English people and I couldn't find anybody. I was listening to a lot of black drummers and I was trying to get that side of music into Genesis to try and make Genesis a bit more earthy; a bit more funky. So, a lot of what I was doing was coming from the heads of Bernard Purdie, Billy Cobham, Freddie White, etc.

"When Chester came into the group, there were exceptions, but it was like he was trying to interpret what I was doing, which was an interpretation, really, of what he did in the first place, right? Which meant that it had got second- or third-hand removed and there was no point. I said, 'Listen, forget what I do. You do what you would do naturally, because that's probably what I would have done anyway.' But then, there are other things, like the Ringo side of it and John Bonham, where he couldn't play like that. He can now. So, you get some things like 'Afterglow,' which is just a straight walking, regular Ringo thing. And Chester was playing it like a black funk drummer. I said, 'No, no, no. Just don't play so much with that.' So, he's come 'round to the other way a little bit. We actually sort of met in the middle."

In that same article, Chester stated that perhaps American drummers tend to embellish more, whereas English drummers leave more spaces. What did Phil think of that idea? "I think that depends on the individual. A few years ago, when Michael Walden and I sat down and talked, he said that American drummers can probably play better than English drummers, but they haven't got the music to play. Whereas the English drummers have the music. That makes a little bit of sense to me.

"This is a general comment because, obviously, there are going to be exceptions. You have amazing virtuoso American players, but in England there's usually far more stress on the music. I thought it was interesting coming from an American musician like him who can throw himself around the drumkit with amazing dexterity. I guess he was also trying to write at that time, so he was noticing that maybe as a writer, he would have to play less.

"One of the reasons why I wanted to do this interview was that I felt that people are forgetting about me as a drummer. That's my first and last love, really. Everything else can revolve around it. But, I think when you have written a song, you have much more of a concept of the one way it should be done. Some people say, 'Isn't it nice to get the other person's interpretation of it?' In some instances, it can. But in other instances, it can actually take you away from the initial tune.

"I've had that problem coming out on the road with nine people trying to recreate what I did mostly on my own in the studio. I mean, obviously, the horns did their stuff, but I did the keyboards—even the bass pedals on some of the tracks—and the drums. And, here I am. Chester's playing the drums instead of me. Pete's playing the keyboards instead of me. Hopefully, it be-

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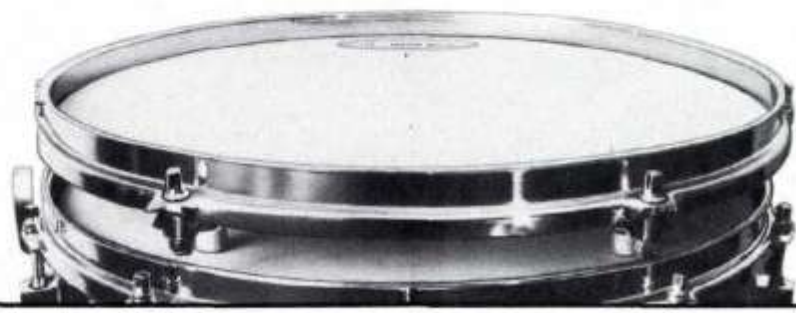

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"My becoming a better writer of music has changed my idea of what drums should be and what drums should do. It's so important to be aware of the song. Steve Gadd did four tracks on Tony Banks' new album. He spent more time in the control room listening to the song than actually playing. He listened to it four or five times—'Let's hear it again' . . . 'Let's hear it again'—so he understood the song. Then, he went in and played to the song. That's important."

Collins feels that he gets almost as much enjoyment from playing with Thompson as he does playing on his own. "The high points of the show for me are points when we're both playing together. I think that the blending of the two is something that even I am surprised at—how strong it is. When I listen to the tape, I think, 'That's good. That really does sound like a perfectly synchronized machine.' There's an understanding where if someone starts off something, then the other person backs off a little bit. Maybe you can't do triplets over four. You've got to have a lot more discipline and know what you can do and what you can't do. We work some things out in the 'Los Endos' solo. We have reference points, and between those reference points, then we're open.

"Ever since I saw Jim Gordon and Jim Keltner with Joe Cocker's Mad Dogs and Englishmen, I loved the way they played together. And, Ralph Humphrey and Chester with Frank Zappa were really good. But, when I became the singer with Genesis, I said that I really wanted to play on the albums. We often thought about getting Daryl in to play guitar, and Chester over to play with me. But when you're there and you're actually recording, you kind of want to do it all yourself. So, if there are ever two drum parts, I usually double and play them all myself, although that doesn't often happen.

"It's the concept of having it as a writer. It's like when you've written something or been part of a group that's written something, you know how it should go. That's why I produce my own albums.

"You don't get Leonardo da Vinci sitting here telling a bloke over there with a pot of paint, 'Put a bit of red up there.' Because that bloke will put a bit of red where he thinks it should go, as opposed to Leonardo da Vinci getting off his ass and doing it, which is where it should go. There's an art to someone who does something personally, rather than gives directions. That's why it would be frustrating to have a leader of a group who constantly has to try and explain his ideas to other musicians to play. Luckily, in Genesis, we all write the stuff. Therefore, I'm responsible for what I've written and that's what it is."

Contrary to a lot of people these days, Collins thinks that the state of the rock music business is quite healthy. "There's an awful lot going on," he said. "It's a lot healthier that it was three or four years ago. The new bands that are around now may sound very similar to each other, but at least they sound better than the bands who sounded similar to each other three or four years ago.

"When the punk thing started, I didn't personally feel that threatened by it because Genesis has got a very loyal following of people who like Genesis music. You'd be surprised at how many punk bands like Genesis but won't admit it. I met Topper Headon at the airport a couple of years ago and he came up to me and said, 'My name's Topper Headon. I play with The Clash.' Then he hesitated and looked around. 'I think you're really good." But, he had to make sure that no one else was looking, right? Then I did 'Face Value' at the Townhouse. The Dead Kennedys were watching television. I walked through and the bloke says, 'That's Phil Collins. Ahhh, I've been a fan of their's forages.'

"You can't make money nowadays; you can't exist as a group doing what we're doing because we've established something over the years. And now, you've got to do what's in the musical climate. So, they can't be seen liking us. In fact, someone said a great thing in *Melody Maker* the other day. He said that we're entering a period of the closet Genesis fan—the people who actually listen to us in their spare time, but won't admit it.

"I like the Sex Pistols. I thought they made great records. They had a lot of energy and the records sounded great. I've got some at home on the juke box. But, I mean, they're the figurehead of that period and they sounded good. But then there was also just a lot of crap when everybody was deliberately detuning their guitars and deliberately singing out of tune. With the coming of people like Elvis Costello, The Police, and probably a few others that I'm not aware of, that punk thing started to become more sophisticated and that's when I started getting interested in it. The Police are one of my favorite bands. I mean, Stewart Copeland's got an ego the size of this hotel, but he *can* play. There are lots of bands like Culture Club and Wazoo and ABC and all that. Some of the records are good; some leave me cold.

"This fashion thing goes in fits and starts. The fashion to dance, now, you know, it's 'respectable disco,' I suppose you'd call it. But, it's not love songs. I mean, I write love songs, really. Very unfashionable thing to do. If you look like Boy George, you can sing a love song like 'Do You Really Want To Hurt Me.' If you're me and you sing a song like that, you're accused of being middle-aged. It's a peculiar set of affairs." |^f|

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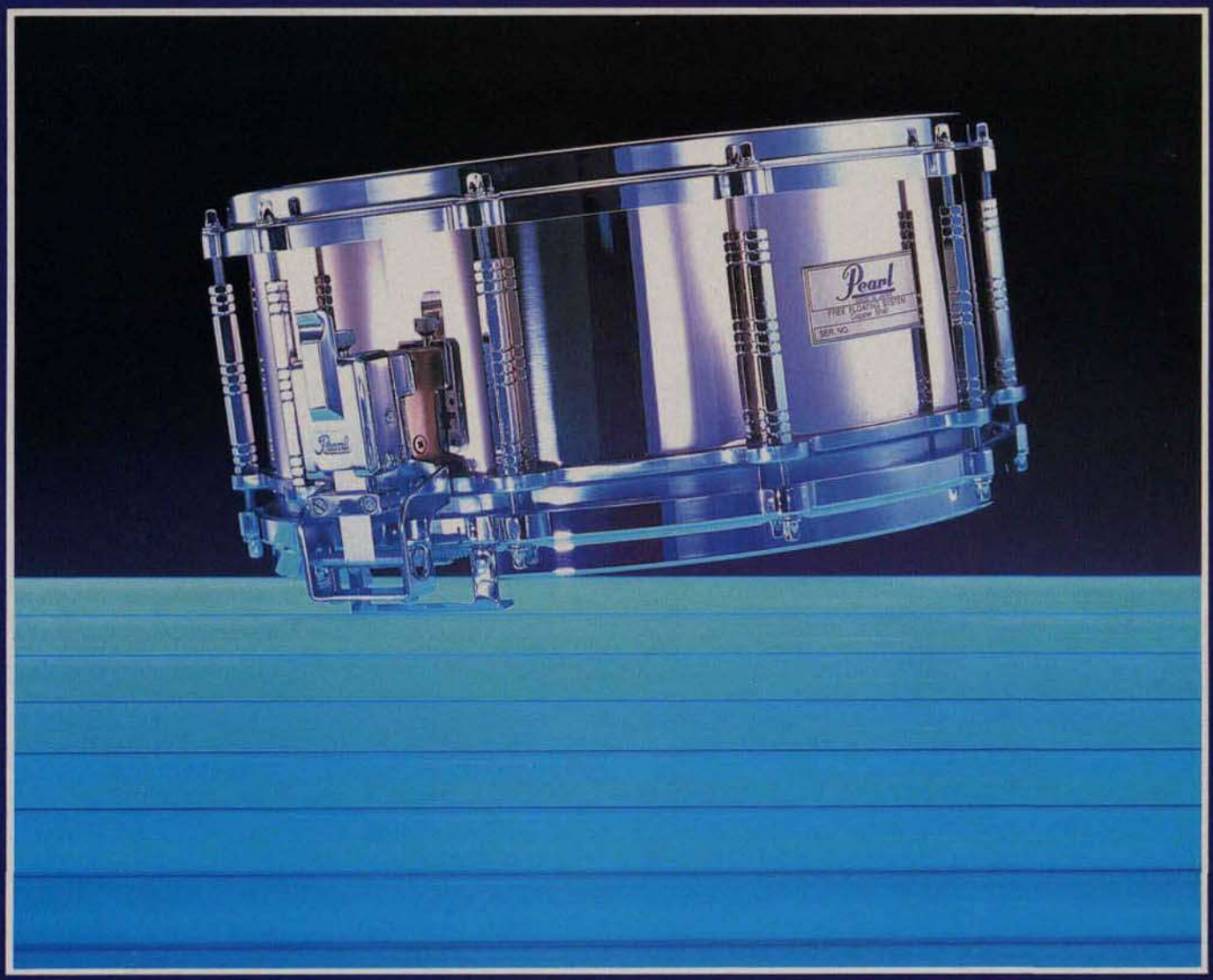

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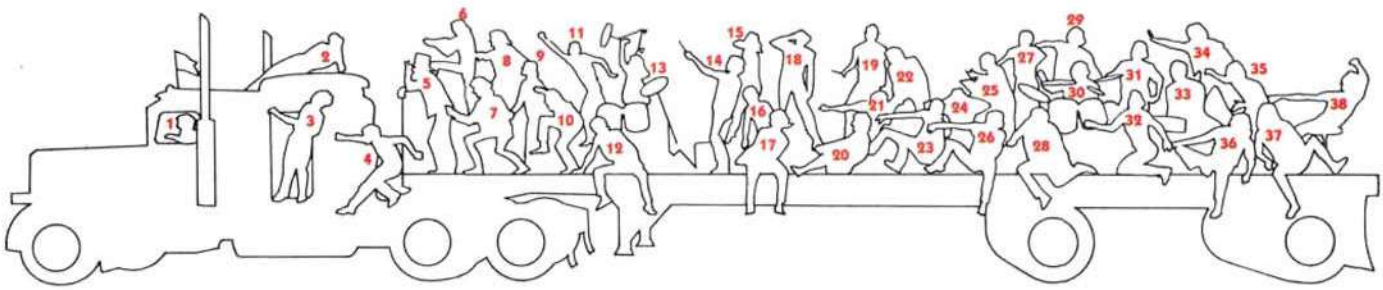

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Def Leppard's

Rick Allen

Rick Allen carefully studies his hands, which are blistered already, just a few days into Def Leppard's tour with Billy Squier. "Yeah, I've often thought about it," he says, examining one especially calloused finger, "how playing the drums has totally changed my life."

Were Allen not the drummer for the British hard rock band, he probably would have ended up like so many inhabitants of Sheffield, an industrial city known for its steel production. If you don't escape, your future is pretty well defined: You leave school and go to work in the steel mills, bring home your pay, and holiday once a year in neighboring Blackpool. Allen, an affable type with curly blond hair and contagious enthusiasm, shudders at the thought.

"I think that'd be soul-destroying, working in a steel mill," he says in a thick accent. "You see, I've never had a so-called 'normal' job; I've never known what it's like to have to get up in the morning and go to work."

At just 19 years of age, Allen is part of heavy metal's up-and-coming band; the great white-noise hope. Def Leppard's third album, *Pyromania,* bolted into the Top 10 within weeks of its release. The group is currently on its first headlining tour of the U.S., the final market it had to crack in its quest to displace such heavy-metal monoliths as AC/DC, and the ever-lingering shadow of Led Zeppelin. "We knew that with this album it was either sink or swim," admits Allen. "If we didn't do a really good one, we were going to fall by the wayside because there's just so much competition."

When Allen joined Leppard in 1979, he already was a drumming veteran of several years and several amateur bands. "I was about 10 when I first joined a group," he recalls. "My first one was called Smokey Blue—the worst." The trio consisted of just drums and two guitars, leaving Allen to fill in the spot of the bass guitar, something he credits for his strong bass drum technique. After brief stints with outfits whose music encompassed everything from pop to heavy metal, Allen one day saw an advertisement in a local paper: "Leppard Loses Skins."

The group's original drummer, Tony Reuben, was quitting. "He was more interested in his girlfriend than in the band; I'll bet he's kicking himself now." Allen's audition began on an unnerving note. "A left-handed drummer had just auditioned using my kit, and he changed everything around; absolutely *destroyed* it. I thought, 'Oh, no.' " However, after running through several Leppard originals, Allen was in. "I knew I was good enough to play along and impress them. The guy who works for me now as my roadie started flashing the thumbs-up to the others, so they offered me the gig."

Asked if the band, which at that time included singer Joe Elliott, bassist Rick Savage, and guitarists Steve Clark and Pete Willis, was a tight playing unit, Allen laughs and exclaims, "No! That's something that's come together only over the past three years. Back then it was, 'Ah, gotta get this fill in!'—pretty shabby all around. It took a bit of time for us to learn how to play with each other."

The group rehearsed in an old building located next to the Sheffield United football stadium. "You had to walk up this endless flight of steps," Allen remembers fondly, "but it was a lot of fun in those days." Gigs took place at local pubs, often in front of what Rick calls "rent-a-crowds—we'd invite all of our friends down, just to fill the places up." These were definite "no-budget shows," he says. "Maybe someone would pay for your beer; that was about it." Even though Allen was still in school and the others worked at various menial day jobs, the band worked steadily, some weeks as often as five or six nights. "It was terrible," he says, rolling his eyes. "First we'd pack the gear into the van, all pile in, and drive to the show. Afterward, we'd have to unload the equipment back into the rehearsal room. There were days at school where I'd just fall asleep during the lessons."

Unlike the usual parent/musician conflict, the members of Def Leppard were encouraged by their moms and dads, who later received a heartfelt thanks on the back of the group's first album, *On Through the Night.* "We couldn't have done it without them," Allen says flatly, adding that his parents actually advised him to drop out of school when he was 15, a full year before Britain's legal age of emancipation.

"The authorities were after me for quite a while," says Rick, a fact seconded by Joe Elliott. "Rick just avoided them; they probably chased him all over the country, but they never caught up with him." Allen remembers often hiding at home because the school was just down the road. "Whenever somebody came to the door, I had to peer out the window to see who it was, in case it was a truant officer." Besides giving the fledgling group words of support, some of the parents also contributed money. "If we needed a new amplifier, they'd lend us the bread. Nobody ever said, 'You shouldn't be doing this.' Everyone was pushing in the right direction." It paid off.

Although the band began as just a local attraction, its star rose quickly. An EP titled *Getcha Rocks Off,* recorded with an interim drummer, began to receive airplay on U.K. DJ Andy Peebles' Radio 1 program and went on to sell an impressive 25,000 copies as an independent release. Suddenly, the major record labels, who had rejected the band just months before, clammered around. Def Leppard elected to go with PolyGram Records.

Within just months of signing, Leppard found themselves on major concert tours with the likes of AC/DC, Pat Travers, and Ted Nugent, a far cry from the dingy pubs they'd been used to. Allen recalls what it was like to have a roadie set up his equip-

by Phillip Bashe

Photo by Linda Matlow/Pix

ment for the first time. "It was like,'Oh, fantastic! I guess I'm *a star,* now.'" With their average age still under 20, Leppard suddenly were challenging seasoned heavy-metal bands like Judas Priest and UFO, some of which did not take lightly the fact that, while they'd been slogging around the English circuit for years before achieving recognition, here was a band of novices enjoying a hit LP its first time out.

"There was some resentment, yes," Allen says carefully. "But that's the way it goes. Just recently we were supposed to do a headlining show with Gary Moore [whose drummer, ex-Deep Purple member lan Paice, is one of Allen's idols]. I didn't really like the idea; I would have felt very uncomfortable."

On the other hand, there were drummers who offered support and commented favorably on young Allen's style, much to his delight—and surprise. "I never really rated myself as a brilliant drummer," he sheepishly admits. "Rudiments and that; that's out of the window for me. However, all the drummers for the headlining bands, like Tommy Aldridge [then of the Pat Travers Band, now with Ozzy Osbourne], would come over and tell me that they liked the way I played. I'd think, 'God, that's great—he actually liked my drumming!' "

Allen is mostly self-taught, although at his parents' insistence he did study for a short time with ex-Joe Cocker drummer Kenny Slade. Allen had zeroed in on the drums almost immediately after first being exposed to rock 'n' roll. "One of the first bands I listened to was Deep Purple," he says with reverence; "the *Made in Japan* album. I learned a lot from them and lan Paice, who's a wonderful drummer." In the years since, influential players have ranged from studio technicians like Steve Gadd and Jeff Porcaro to fusionists like Billy Cobham.

Allen's first kit was a Del Rey ("Bet you never heard of it") consisting of snare, tom-tom, bass drum, and one cymbal "that used to turn inside out if you hit it too hard." Drums always have been his one musical passion, although Phil Collen, current Leppard guitarist, tried teaching him a bit of guitar. "I know a few of the basics, but"—he holds up his hands again—"my fingers are too stubby. What else can I do with these?"

Most noticeable on his left hand is a precipice of tissue between his thumb and his index finger, which comes from playing using traditional grip, a rarity among hard-rock drummers. "I've always played this way," Rick explains. "My drum teacher was an ex-jazzer and taught me this way. Being a sort of lazy person, I just stuck with it.

"But it's like a whip," he points out, demonstrating a sharp, quick downward stroke. "I feel that I actually get more power with my left hand than I do with my right." Other drummers often are surprised when they see how he holds the sticks. "Yeah, very surprised. 'How do ya do that?' The only problem is that you often get a blister, which you have to cut off. Otherwise: 'Aargh!'"

Perhaps the most distinctive element of Allen's style is his sense of restraint. If he were to be compared to one contemporary drummer, it would be the Rolling Stones' Charlie Watts—just add a few decibels. Asked if it pleases him more to be known as a drummer, or as a member of Def Leppard, he immediately chooses the latter. His sense of restraint is shared by the rest of the group, which exemplifies the modern brand of heavy rock played by Leppard, Foreigner, Loverboy, and Billy Squier; music that can be called "pop metal" or "energy pop." There's an emphasis on the *group,* unlike heavy metal's early '70s heyday when bands like Zeppelin and Deep Purple cast that philosophy aside, often using a song's structure as a mere launching pad for solos.

"I never liked the older generation of heavy-metal bands," says Allen,"where you would have those streaks of self-indulgence, like a ten-minute drum solo. It was too much, and boring." The role of the heavy-rock drummer has changed along with the music, he contends, to where it's now "more important to play for the *song* than for yourself, and I like that. I really get off playing for the songs, although it is nice to be able to do something flashy once in a while."

The absence of ego is evident when the band works on a new song. Music is supplied by the guitars and bass, and lyrics by the vocalist. Although Allen works out most of his drum parts "just by playing together," he says that the others do make suggestions, which he happily tries. "Joe messes about a bit on the drums, so he'll say, 'Try this,' and I'll do it. If anybody wants to make suggestions, that's all right with me. Sav [bassist Savage] is very good at thinking up drum parts; he's a very sure sort of musician—very rock steady. When he comes up with something, it's usually right. It's good to have that sort of person in a band—someone who can act as a sounding board for ideas as well."

On stage, where Leppard's set runs either 55 minutes or 74 minutes, as on the current headlining tour ("plenty long enough for me, I'll tell ya"), they mostly rely on the recorded arrangements. Older tunes, however, are sometimes extended or

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tampered with, which the drummer enjoys. "I like that spontaneity, where you don't exactly know what's going on. Like, there's one song, 'Hit and Run,' where we go into this middle section, a very Keith Richards-like thing. At that part of the show, anything can happen; we just sort of go along with the audience."

Leppard's live set is mostly uptempo, but Allen claims no problems with stamina. "I'm still quite young," he laughs. Most of the tunes are short bursts of energy, usually no more than four minutes long. That too goes against traditional metal concerts, where lengthy guitar jams often uncoil songs into 20-minute epics. Although Leppard go out of their way to deny any affiliation with Britain's punk movement of the mid-'70s, Allen concedes that the more direct approach is derived from the new-wave credo that less is more.

Leppard also eschew wicked time changes—once a staple of heavy metal—for more steady beats, most of which are straight 4/4. On "Photograph," the band's recent hit single, Allen sets up a rhythmic groove with his bass drum and snare, using a pattern that has its roots in straight-ahead rockers like the Stones' "Honky Tonk Women" and Foreigner's "Hot Blooded. "The most tricky song was a Rush-influenced track off the first album, called "Answer to the Master," which included a relatively complicated section. It remains a favorite of Allen's, although, he says with mock sadness, "The guys went and scrapped the song from the show, so that was the end of my fun."

Allen mostly plays to bassist Rick Savage on stage, relying on his monitors, which he sets up for high frequencies. "I've got this really simple system: I wear just one earplug, so the level is very low. Even if the monitor breaks, I can still hear myself. It's like shoving your finger into your ear if you're a singer."

He and Savage, he says, "work quite well together," but adds that "it took a long time for us to get to know one another musically. What makes it difficult is the way we've been working these past few years, doing an album for months and months, and then going out on tour. We never really got into a routine, because we didn't get to play together in the studio. It was a real drag, but it's sounding real good now."

His Ludwig kit consists of a 22" bass drum, 12" and 13" rack toms, 16" and 18" floor toms, and a 6 1/2 x 14 *Super Sensitive* snare drum, all with Ludwig *Rockers* heads. "I used to use double-headed toms, but now I'm using just a single head because our sound engineer prefers it that way. He finds that he can get the sound much easier, and it doesn't change the feel of the drums very much for me."

Allen plays with custom-made sticks that are relatively heavy, with a fat tip and little taper. "They're made of hickory," he explains. "I had found this one stick that I liked, but it was far too light, made of a different wood.

"So I got a bit of sandpaper, sanded it all down, and then found this company in Leichester—Cymbals and Percussion—and had them copy it. They're the best sticks—I've turned so many people onto them. I gave Dave Holland of Judas Priest some, and he quite liked them. They don't break, for starters, and they're a nice, comfortable weight."

For cymbals he chooses Paiste, with whom he's recently struck up an endorsement agreement; he is a particularly ardent booster of their *Rude* cymbals. "They sound awful in the studio, but on stage they cut through really well." His cymbal setup includes a 22" 2002 ride, two 20" *Rudes,* two 18" *Rudes and*—his favorite—a 22" pang cymbal imported from China that he goes for in a pinch. To drive a song, says Allen, he often relies on the bell of the ride cymbal.

Allen tunes his snare to a fixed pitch and then works on the toms, which he supplements with Simmons electronic drums for a vibrant, ringing sound that doesn't sacrifice the acoustics' attack. "You just preset the sensitivity controls, although you have to be careful that you don't lag. You've got to stay on top of the beat, but it's an incredible drum sound."

Allen's interest in sound possibilities comes from having worked with producer Mutt Lange for both the *Pyromania* and *High 'n' Dry* LPs. Lange, whose credits include AC/DC and Foreigner, is a tough taskmaster, but one of the few modern producers with a truly identifiable sound. "He's amazing," says Rick. "You can listen to his backing tracks—just the drums and the bass—and it sounds so powerful.

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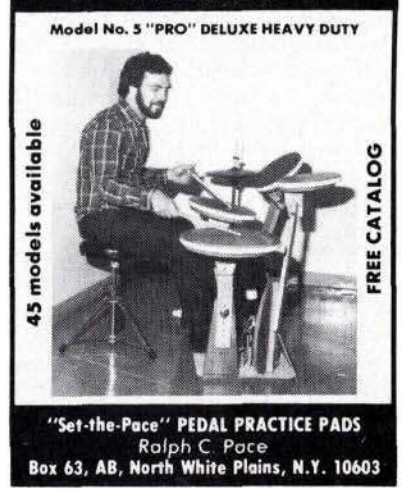

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"He's a slave driver," Allen continues. "Sometimes you'd feel like breaking down and banging your head against the wall. It would be like you'd play the song half-a-dozen times, and he wouldn't put anything down on tape. You'd do it again and he'd say, 'You've really got to get the timing.' You'd do it again and he'd say, 'Well, the timing's good—vibe's gone,' and you'd have to do it all over.

"My timing really improved, though, after working with Mutt, and he taught me a lot about simplicity." As for doing a click track on the next Def Leppard album, Allen says jokingly, "I don't know; I don't want to get old before me time. Plus, I might attack Mutt or something."

In general, Allen is not keen on studio work, of which he complains, "It's far too slow; just drags on and on. Plus, you never get to play as a band. I much prefer live work." Despite heavy-metal's '80s metamorphosis, the concert stage is still its true environment. Allen enjoys the nomadic life he leads as part of Def Leppard; it's even a family affair, with his older brother Robert employed as the band's road manager. However, the high point of each day comes with the shows. "One of the best feelings is standing in front of a full house of 10,000 or 18,000."

Allen also enjoys returning to Sheffield, where he and Robert still reside with their father, an insurance broker, and their mother, a secretary. "She keeps asking me when she can retire," Allen laughs. "I don't think they quite grasp how big it's all become, though. I think it's a bit difficult for them sometimes, because when my brother and I are home we'll have the whole crew over for meals and such, and then all of a sudden we'll be gone, and there's just the two of them in this great big house."

Spending that time at home acts as a sort of psychological decompression chamber, even if it might seem, in Allen's words, "blank, which I suppose it sort of is, but I love that, just trying to be a 'normal' person again. There are people who can't put being a 'rock star' down, the results of which usually are pretty unfortunate. Like, one of our roadies—the last person he worked for was James Honeyman-Scott...."

The band's working-class background has helped it adjust to success, Allen feels, a sentiment echoed by the others. However, one original member, Pete Willis, fell victim to the escalating fame and developed a chronic drinking problem just as Leppard were beginning to gain an international audience. After years of repeated warnings and threats, Willis finally was sacked last year. It's a painful subject for the band, and Allen touches upon it gingerly.

"When we first started breaking, everyone buckled down to the idea that this was the job we had to do, and that if we stuck together, we'd be successful." Willis' boozing had always been a problem, especially on stage, where the others "never knew if Pete was drunk or not, so we'd always be on guard, waiting to fill in for him. We worked around the problem for three years—there were *so* many last chances. Nobody would shout at the guy; we'd sit him down and say, 'Pete, you know, it's about time you got the act together.' It would last for a day or two, and then....

"I didn't really like to see the guy go." New guitarist Phil Collen, formerly with U.K. heavy-metalers Girl, is a vast improvement. "He's incredible," Rick enthuses. "He has stage presence, everything. He more than amply fills Pete's shoes."

The entire band has a reputation for being able to store incredible quantities of alcohol, to which Allen offers a mild protest. "I don't think we really drink all that much; we certainly don't before shows. On stage, everybody plays totally straight.

"We want to see this last another 10 years or so," says Allen, who won't turn 20 until November ("twenteen," he corrects). "This is what I want to do, and if we don't get too crazy, we can continue doing it."

What if he should someday have to come up with an alternative career? "I'd be a cook," he answers, flipping an imaginary omelet. "That way I could still use my hands."

ON THE MOVE

"On The Move" is a column devoted to drummer/percussionists who aren't in the public eye, but still have something to offer. This "something" could range from technical ability, lifestyle, new drum set-ups or inventions, business ideas or musical ideas. If you're interested in being considered for "On The Move," send up to three double-spaced typewritten pages about yourself, an 8 × 10 b/w glossy photo and a cassette or album. Be sure to include your name, address and telephone number. Send all correspondence to: Modern Drummer, 1000 Clifton Avenue, Clifton, New Jersey, 07013 in care of "On The Move." Because of the expected response we will not be able to return your material.

Thunder Child

Photo by Chris Walter

The band I play with and am co-founder of is called Warlord. Formed three years ago in the San Francisco Bay Area, we relocated to Los Angeles a year and a half later because the music scene in the Bay Area doesn't compare to Los Angeles. The record companies are here, there's more demand for heavy metal, and the Bay Area isn't as open to new things. It's a couple of years behind Los Angeles.

I've been playing the drums since I was a small child, drumming on suitcases and beating on kitchen pots. My early efforts were sidetracked by the usual childhood pastimes, like bike riding and climbing trees.

Formal lessons began at age seven, but it wasn't until several years later that I became fully enamored with the idea of playing the drums. My main influences since then have been Aynsley Dunbar, Cozy Powell and Tommy Aldridge.

My drumming is characterized by a powerful style and a definite, pronounced form, because that's what my music demands. If I were playing in a jazz band, I wouldn't be laying down heavy double-bass licks.

That's what a lot of drummers don't understand. The drumming is supposed to fit the music. If Neil Peart were playing with AC/DC, he wouldn't be playing the same licks he does with Rush.

I think a drummer can learn from all kinds of music, not just from the music he plays. At this stage of my career, though, I have to concentrate only on what I am currently playing. It's such a competitive business that a musician has to be the best at what he does. The heavy metal audience doesn't care what kind of funk or jazz licks I can play. But while my time and effort are focused on heavy metal drumming, I do listen to other kinds of music and try to incorporate bits and pieces into my own style.

It's a style that emphasizes four-way coordination. The object is to have all four limbs playing. If nothing else, the left foot on the hi-hat should at least be keeping time. Some of the best phrases come about when the hi-hat is played with the foot on the off-beat, or only on "1" and "3" or "2" and "4."

I like to keep things very groove or beat oriented, as the music requires. This does not mean simple—just very catchy so the listener can grab onto something.

I use two bass drums in many of the beats because this adds power and I can lay down tight rhythmic patterns with them. I occasionally keep the top extremely straight and let the bass drums create the rhythm pattern.

I use big Ludwig drums and many cymbals to create a variety of sounds. The most important point, though, is for a drummer to use all of his equipment, no matter what the size or number (e.g., Peart versus Bonham).

It all comes down to how well you can use the drums to express yourself. A drummer should use all available means of expression in playing. So many drummers handicap themselves by not using both their arms and legs. The object is to use all the things at your disposal to make the music more interesting, more original, and create musical phrases. Take advantage of all the opportunities you have to create new sounds.

My biggest problem is cracking and shattering cymbals. I have tried them all and none can stand up to the way I play. I have listened to all the suggestions about solving this problem, but I will not change my style or compromise the way I play just because the cymbals can't handle it. I love the way I play and will not change.

I had played in a few different bands before I met my partner, whose stage name is Destroyer. I was playing with a group at a record store promotional gig, and he was there watching.

It turned out that he was as dedicated to music as I was, and we both shared the same kind of style and ideas about what our music should be. He and I joined forces.

Warlord is a classically based heavy metal band. We have a concept, a stage show and a philosophy. Our main goal is constant improvement on our individual instruments, which leads to total improvement as a group.

The Warlord debut album, *Deliver Us,* is doing quite well. At the time of this article, it's number four on the import charts in England and number 34 overall there. This was a self-produced album, and the only help we received was through a good distribution deal.

One last non-musical note. Without a good business foundation, a band will go nowhere. It is as important as a good musical base if you want to get ahead in the industry, because the recording industry is not sitting in a drugstore waiting to get discovered—it's all a business. If nothing else, use common sense.

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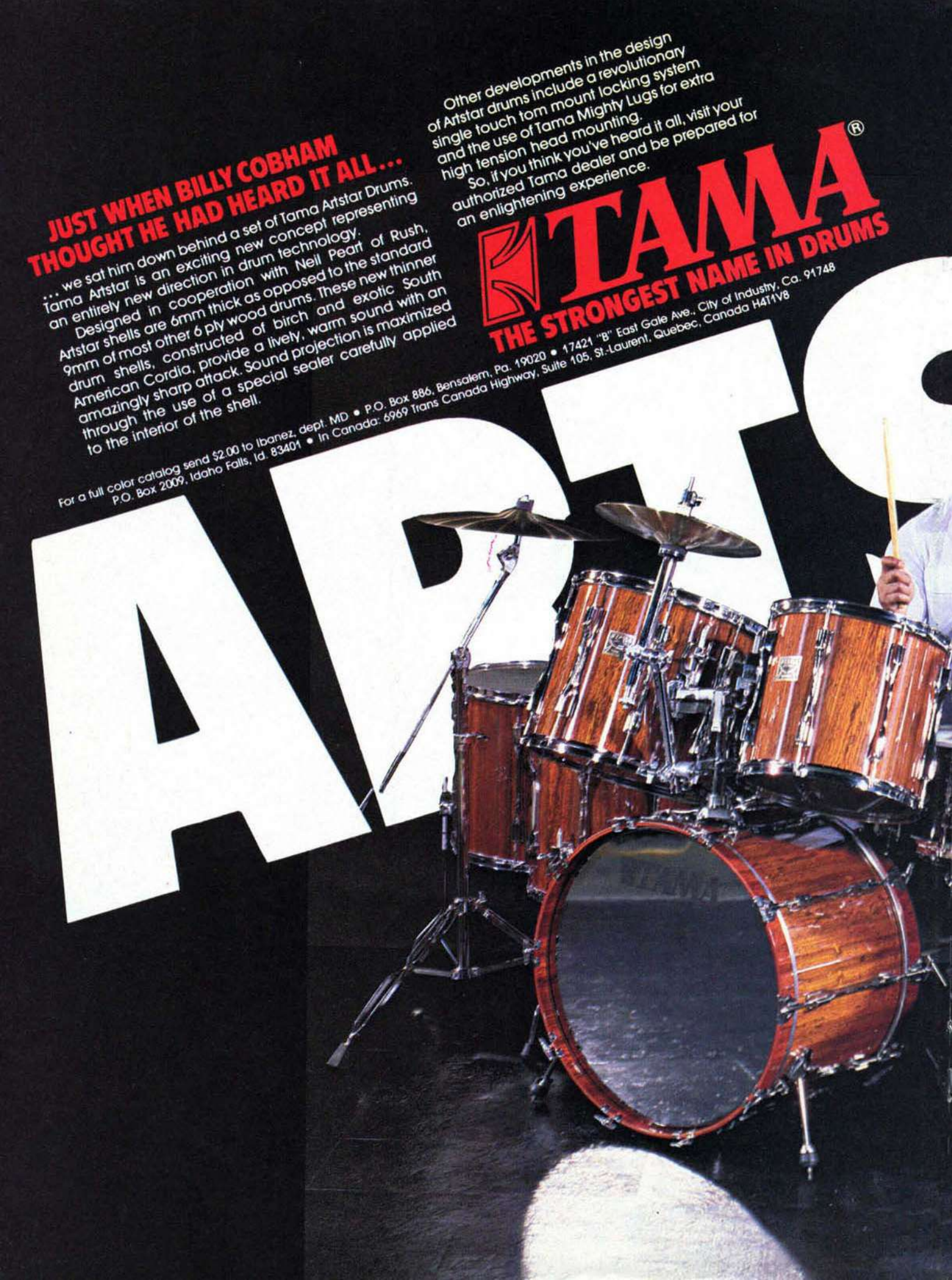

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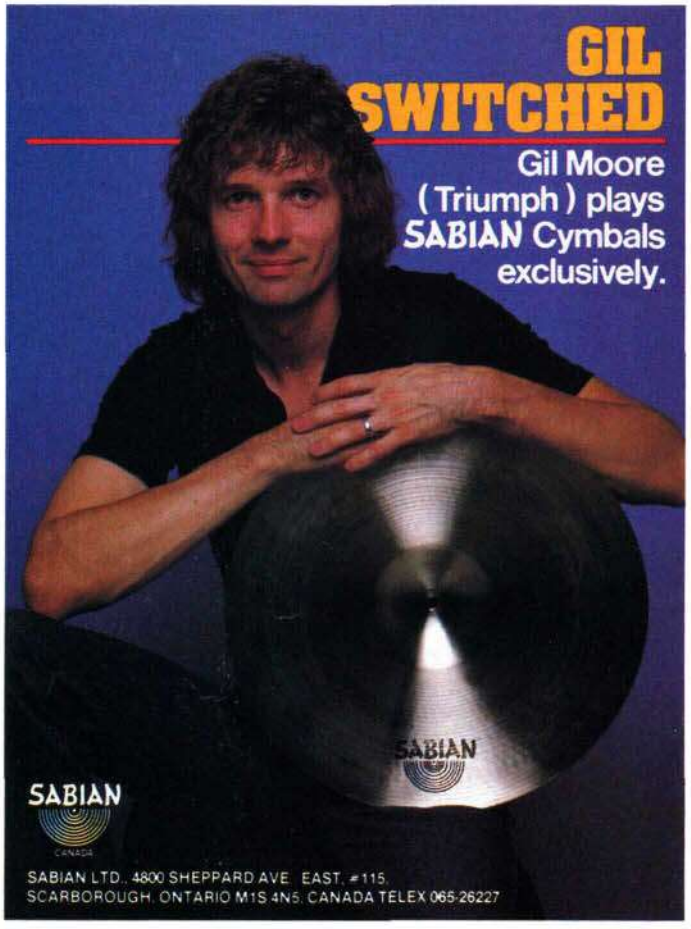

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Ndugu continued from page 17

make me sound different, and I'm aware of that. But it's a show. Buddy Rich and other drummers, they've always put on a show. Krupa and all of them.

RT: Do you have your feet hooked under something when you lean back like that?

NC: No, it's balance. When you lift weights on a bench press your legs are down and you're lying out flat. There are so many things that we do naturally as human beings that can be incorporated on the stage—it's just a matter of being aware of what those things are. That's really just a bench press move. It's balance; gymnastics. The only difference is that you don't have a bench under your whole body. So there are a number of approaches you can use: the athletic approach, the dance approach, the overall stage approach, but the results are the same. I'm very conscious of getting to those points rather than just sitting there playing. That's been one of the complaints of other drummers during the phasing out of bebop into fusion. They were saying, "You'd be a great drummer, but you move your body too much." Again, there was just something driving me to do that. As long as you're doing something that people can talk about and remember, you're okay. It's when they forget what I've done that I'm seriously in trouble. I mean, if my performance yesterday suffered because I busted so many drumheads, if they remember, "Man, he tore up everything he had up there," that's great, because that's part of it. So my mission is accomplished. I know I'm not going to be able to sit up there and play more drums than Jack or Tony are going to play. But for the kind of music that I'm playing, it's up to me to enhance it to the point that people remember Ndugu and respect him on the music scene and acknowledge him as one of the cats. Like I said, it's not about trying to outplay this drummer or that drummer. They can have that. Let me do what I do and get some acceptance from it.

RT: Do you plan to change the kind of drumhead you use, after what happened yesterday?

NC: No. What happened was, I got an order for the new *Fiberskyns,* and they didn't bring them. I had run out, so I was using backstock. Live, I think my heads last about two weeks, because I'm playing them hard. And most of my drums are pitch-controlled drums, so I'm stretching and pulling beyond their tuning both ways. I'll loosen them all the way, or my *Roto-Toms* will end up being very tight

RT: How about the rest of your equipment?

NC: Well, the first thing everybody should know is that I don't play what I play because they give it to me. I do endorse, but that's not the primary reason I play it. I play it because, for me, it works, and some of the things I use are only made by certain people. I've used Paiste cymbals for 13 years, and the first two or three years I used them I didn't have an endorsement, but that's what I wanted. Then, during my first year with Santana, Remo Belli came to a show with Danny Seraphine of Chicago, and he saw that the only heads I had were Remo heads. So he said, "Come on by the factory. Let's talk." At that point they were just developing the *Roto-Toms.* I was one of the pioneers of that instrument, so I endorsed that. They later developed the pedal *Roto-Tom,* which they are no longer going to make, but I am going to continue to play, because it's very functional.

RT: Why is Remo stopping production of them?

NC: Because it's too expensive. Instruments have gotten beyond the reach of the beginning musician, economically. I think there has to be more development of instruments that are accessible to the semi-professional and amateur. Myself and Billy and Narada and all of us, we play all this stuff, a lot of it because we don't have to buy it. So we end up with 15 to 20 drums onstage, and we ain't bought them. Young drummers who come to see us feel like they have to have all of that to become a part of the music business. They go bankrupt trying to buy all that equipment. We've got to cut back in terms of equipment costs so the drummers coming up, can be inspired to do their thing.

So I use all Remo drumheads. Depending on what line of drumming I'm doing—if I'm doing recording I might use a few *CS*

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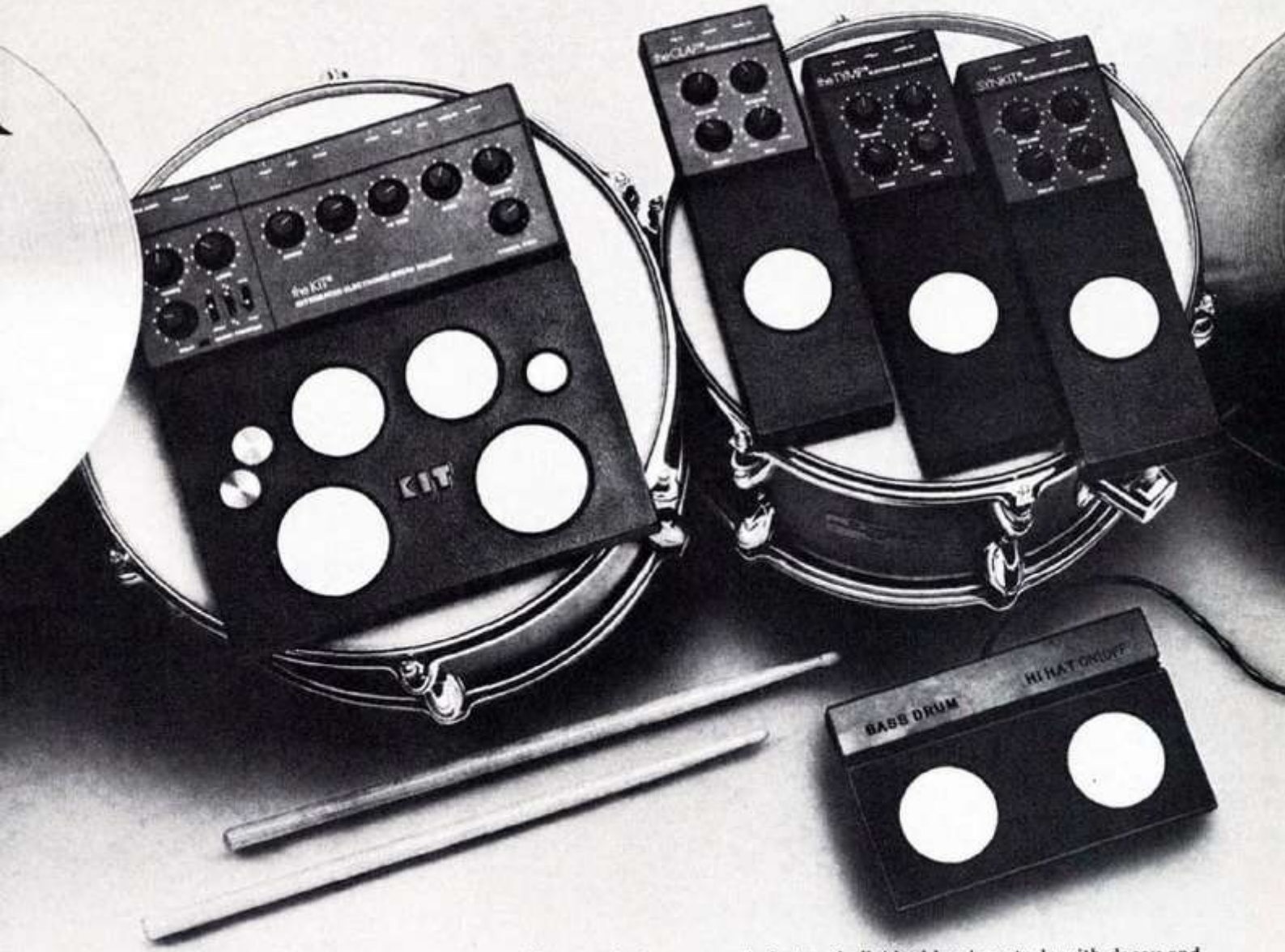

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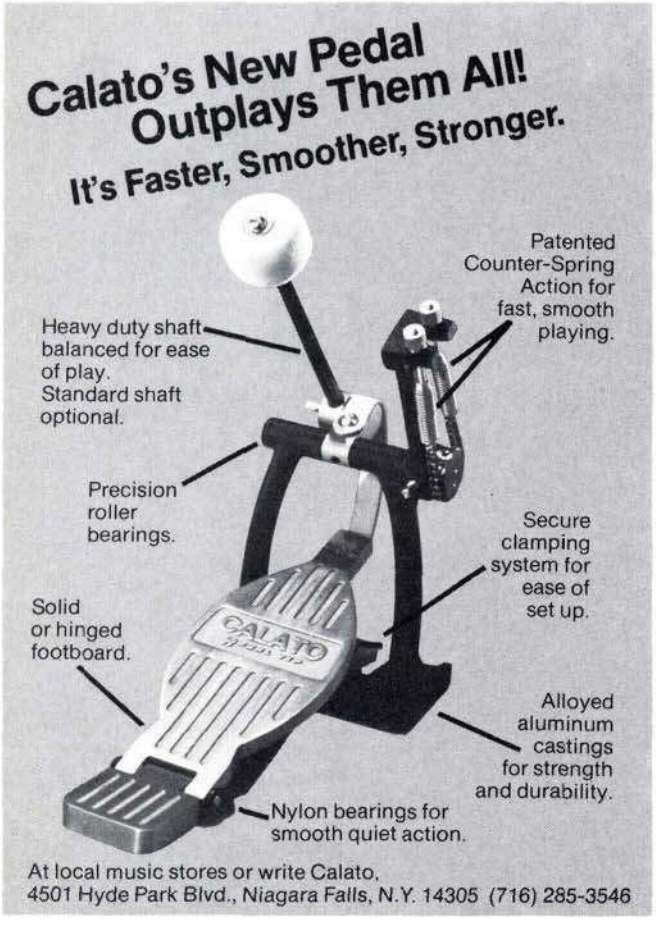
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heads, and I use *Ambassador* heads on the bass drum for recording. But generally, *Fiberskyn* mediums are my head. Live, I use those all the time.

Drum-wise, I use Yamaha drums exclusively, one reason being that the drums themselves are made out of a good quality wood. Number two, Yamaha is one of the few companies that will listen to some of the things I suggest. They've been instrumental in developing a comfortable pedal floor tom. And they're growing and continually changing. The rims are nice, strong, heavy duty, and all the hardware is fantastic. What makes it great is that it works for me. When I'm playing two timbales, just two, I use Latin Percussion *Tito Puente* model. But when I'm playing four, like you saw yesterday, I use Yamaha, because again, they listened to my feelings. They made me a graduated set of timbales, not only in depth but in diameter also. So my timbales go 15", a deep 14", a shallow 14", and a 13". That's something that LP wouldn't do. It gives me a little uniqueness. They don't sound totally typical Latin, but I'm not doing totally typical Latin anyway, so it works for me.

My sticks are a specially made crossbreed that I have Pro-Mark make up once or twice a year, just for me. It's a crossbreed between a Gretsch *1A* and a Page *1A*. I took the length down about 3/4" from both sticks. I've got the tip of one stick and the diameter of the other stick, and the length is my own personal feeling. It's a totally hickory wood stick, and I wouldn't think of playing a nylon-tip stick. It's heavy, but it's light also. It's a strong stick. It has a strong shaft on it. Nice bead, and the butt is fairly good size.

RT: I saw you toss one away yesterday.

NC: That's the only stick I broke yesterday, which was surprising. That just means I got hold of a good pair to start, because they were killing them heads like crazy.

RT: You did a clinic in San Francisco a few years ago, and talked a lot about how important dynamics are for the drummer.

NC: I think a drummer's success and notability are based on sensitivity as a *musician*—not as a drummer. I don't even approach myself as a drummer. I'm an orchestrator. The drums are just the instrument I use to orchestrate—paint the picture. It is very important that you don't lull the people to sleep with one volume or one style. I think the great drummers are the ones who can give you peaks and valleys in their performance. That's very important. Dynamically we're playing an instrument that naturally can be played loud and hard, but the beauty of the instrument is when it's played soft. Just as you can get your point across loud, you can get it across more so soft because you can draw more attention, number one. Number two, dynamics and accentuations are part of music, period. For drummers to think that they can't do that means that they're not total musicians. It's very important for drummers to vary not only their speed concept, but their volume concept, because those things are synonymous. If you play everything fast—your fill-ins, your beats, a lot of intricate things—you don't give the people time to breathe. If you play everything loud you don't give their ears rest from the volume, so you slowly numb people to what you're doing, which is unfair. So I think that's half of being a drummer. We're not at a point where anybody's playing anything so drastically different. It's just that the style they're using is different. That's all.

RT: You also talked that day about the role of the drummer working with a percussionist.

NC: With the advent of these sophisticated digital drum machines and so forth, the role of the drummer takes on a different shape. Along with playing with a percussionist, as a drummer now you have to have sensitivity to whatever else you're going to play with. It might be a drum machine; it might be tablas; it could be anything. It's very important that you really become a part of whatever characteristic you're trying to portray musically. It's like in Latin music, they don't even use drums. It's timbales, congas, cowbell and all that. In Indian music they don't use drums. In a lot of African music they don't use drums. So it's very important for drummers to absorb whatever style of music they're doing to become a part of that, and to play characteristically of that style. Playing a samba is totally different, dynamically and instrument-

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wise, from playing a heavy rock 'n' roll tune. You have to get into which drums and equipment to use, and how to use it. When you play with a percussionist you can't do all the fill-ins that you want to do. You've got to give the percussionist some space, and vice versa. When you're playing with a bass player who's playing a lot of thumb stuff and popping and all that, you can't play the busy, fast, intricate beat that you might want to play.

RT: What are your ideas about clinics?

NC: Well, the mistake a lot of drummers make at clinics is they just play. You can go to a concert to hear somebody play. I think it's very important to hear what musicians feel about what they're doing. It's very important to know how they arrived at what they're doing and why they think of things a certain way. Again, as I was saying about Miles, direction is the most important thing in music. Direction. Anybody can learn how to play, but once you learn how to do what works for you with that talent and technique, success is inevitable. Drummers come to me now and say, "Give me a lesson." I say, "If I give you a lesson we'll probably only play the drums about 15 minutes. What I can show you on the drums I can show you in 15 minutes, but I can show you some ways to get at yourself that'll take longer than that." It's very important that you open your mind to those directions, rather than just play at a clinic. I'll do a clinic where I talk 45 minutes and play 15, and hopefully, in those 15 minutes, you'll understand everything I've talked about.

RT: What sort of things would you talk about in those 45 minutes?

NC: Style; musicianship; attitude; concept; how to develop that concept and how to apply it to what your desires are musically. I wouldn't try to inspire anyone to sound like me; there's only room for one of us. What I would try to place upon them is to just be conscious of what they're trying to do and work hard towards it. That'sit.

RT: You do a lot of fast bass drum licks with a single pedal. I thought at one point you might be using a double pedal.

NC: I think a double pedal, for me, would be a crutch, just as it would be for Buddy Rich. The first thing is, sometimes it limits you. Sometimes it's too much. Sometimes it's just overkill. Buddy Rich never used two bass drums but it sounds like he's playing two. Tony Williams never used two and he sounds like he's playing two. I think those are my inspirations for sticking with one. I've only got one bass drum foot. The other foot, when you get into the evolution of the instrument, was not created to play no bass drum. The right foot is the bass drum foot. Get everything together on the right foot. After seeing Tony do it, anybody can do it if they work at it. It's just a matter of thinking about it and doing it. Tony Williams showed me—and I'm sure a lot of other drummers—that technically, anything you want to do can be done with very limited equipment, if you get your technique up to par.

RT: Are there any certain exercises you do to strengthen the bass drum foot?

NC: The same exercises I do in my hands I do in my feet. I play consistent 8th notes, or I6ths, depending on what tempo I'm at, for minutes at a time until I really feel pain. Then I switch to the other side. At the same time, I'm varying the dynamic level, up and

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down. So that's giving me dynamic control, strength, and speed at the same time. Then I do the same thing with triplets. That's the key exercise I use, then I play my paradiddles, and other rudiments. My key rudiments are the five-stroke roll, paradiddle, flam paradiddle and the ruff. Everything else is basically a deviation of those anyway. The warm-up—preparing yourself—is the most important part of playing the gig, because it's very physical.

RT: How do you warm up?

NC: I work out every morning just to keep my physical self in tune. There's a heavy wind and pacing factor involved in playing with the kind of power that I have to play with, so you either have to pace yourself, or be in super shape, or both. So I get up and work out, stretch and do sit-ups and push-ups and all of that. I play racquetball, softball, and I skate, because when playing the drums, the overall body works. I have to have every particular section of my body in tune for the drums. A lot of times you only have time to sit back and think for a minute before a gig because there's so much excitement going on around you, but that's important also. Before a show I like to just get by myself and calm down for a little bit; just think about what I have to do so when I get ready to do it I'll be up and smiling.

RT: You play a lot of percussion instruments. What kind of training do you have on timbales and the other percussion?

NC: Well, there is really no study that you can do for percussion, other than the mallet instruments. There has not been a book yet that really captures the styles and techniques of those instruments, because they are very much cultural instruments of a particular segment of the world. Playing congas is totally different from playing bongos, totally different from playing timbales, and totally different from playing guiro. So I think there has to be some influence from those areas, and trial and error. I, to this day, cannot play a successful shekere. My drum roadie makes shekeres and plays the devil out of them, but can't play a samba on the drums. So right now I don't have the inner feeling for that instrument. The instruments that I have a feel for, I'll play them. If I don't have a feel for 'em, I'll tell you in a minute.

RT: I saw you with Santana in 1976, and you had a set of timbales on the left side of your drumset. Did you learn a lot about percussion being in that band?

NC: Yeah, I did. I placed a lot of emphasis on Latin percussion before then, but in terms of applying it to commercial music with power, and playing with a bunch of amplifiers, I hadn't done that. Plus, I was playing with some of the great names in Latin music, both commercially and Latin. So with that it was great. Santana got me up to par, power-wise. When I first got with the band I had to change my setup three times to arrive at where I am now. I went in training because when I first started, after being in the studios and playing shows and so forth for so long, I didn't have the power to project and hear myself back the way I should have, even with amplification. So I had to develop that power. I changed sticks to get my wrists back up, and changed drumheads. I made a full circle to get back to the sticks I used originally, but now I've got the power. I don't have big hands; I don't have big arms. I have very small wrists, and that lets me know that power is not in bulk. Power is basically in your technique. Drumming is in the wrists and ankles. The arms and legs are merely for reaching—for show.

RT: You wrote several of the tunes on Santana's *Amigos* album.

NC: For as long as I've gained any notoriety as a drummer I have been writing and playing percussion and trying to produce and do arrangements, because I learned all that in school. It's just that everyone pigeon-holed me as being just a drummer, and all these years I've still fought. My first recorded tune came in 1970 or '71 and at that time it was jazz. Since then I've written some Grammy winners, some gold albums and so forth, in a new vein. It's something that's just been brewing, but I never got the opportunity because by tradition drummers are dumb. They don't read music or write music. That is the cliche, and that's not true. You saw Jack DeJohnette yesterday. Jack is a great pianist. Tony Williams is a great composer. The new wave of drumming musicians is very in-

telligent. Now we have to fight the mold that some of the older guys set up for us, and that's what I'm doing. Narada Michael Walden—great composer. He's got to fight the mold. He ain't supposed to know how to do that.

RT: The first composition of yours that I heard was "Sister Serene" on George Duke's *I Love The Blues, She Heard My Cry* album.

NC: In order for people to understand me they really have to get more inside some of my compositions, rather than what I play with everybody else. I wrote two songs for the Stars Of The '80s and neither one of them had any drum solos or none of that. Those songs let everybody else get off. The last thing I do when I write a song is figure out what the drums are going to play, because I'm not worried about that. That's not my primary inspiration for doing it. The first thing I do is get what I'm trying to express from inside, and then get into the drum aspect of it.

RT: I understand you're getting in with Quincy Jones.

NC: Yeah, over the last year I've done all of Quincy's projects—myself and Jeff Porcaro. That's been a treat. At this point my main area of concentration is not on playing sessions; it's mainly on producing and writing. However, I'm thankful to say that most of the records that I played on last year were among the top five or ten records of the year. And Quincy helped bring my average up tremendously. Donna Summer's record did well. Michael Jackson's record is still doing well. And outside of Quincy I have been working with Kenny Rogers for two or three years, and Lionel Ritchie, and I did the theme for *Officer and a Gentleman.* They helped put me in maybe the top five recording drummers going right now. Whereas before I was just bumming around, in terms of making records that didn't gain a lot of prominence and acceptance. It's ironic. Once I raised my fee for recording, I started getting calls for better quality stuff and got rid of the riff-raff.

RT: Which tracks on Michael Jackson's *Thriller* album do you play on?

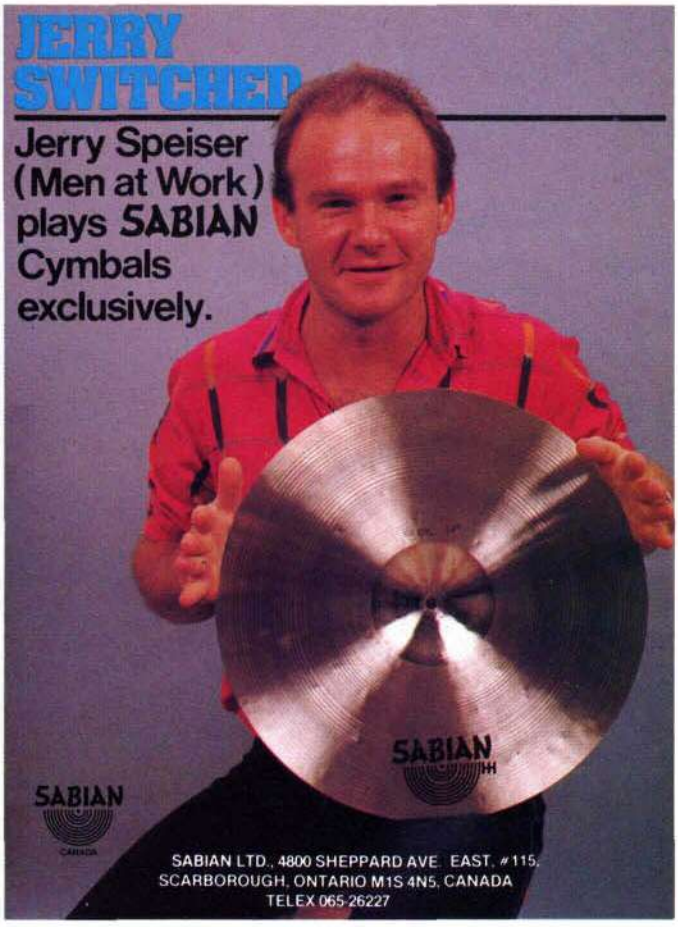
NC: I played on "Thriller," "Baby Be Mine," "P.Y.T.," and "Billie Jean." I think it's a crossbreed of myself, Jeffrey and Roger Linn on "Human Nature." My favorite track is "Baby Be Mine." I just started liking that because everybody else likes it. "Billie Jean," for me, was a lesson in musical discipline. A very simple rhythm that anybody can play who can play drums, but the whole discipline of it was just playing that, and being consistent at it. That's one of the things I stress to other musicians anyway, so for me it was a great reminder. Very simple fill-ins; very few cymbal crashes; just groove for five minutes. It takes discipline, especially when the next day you might have to stand on your head and play a solo for someone else.

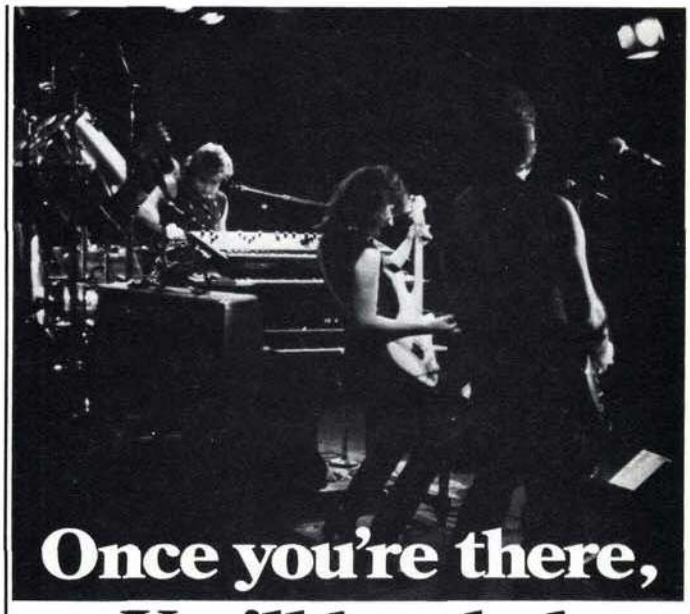
RT: How much room does Quincy leave for you to suggest drum parts?

NC: It depends on the artist he's doing. I had more leeway doing Donna Summer's album and the James Ingram-Patti Austin album that's out now than I had with Michael. That's only because when Quincy works with Michael, they hear and envision a total picture of what's going to go down, and it's very important to stick to the total picture so the overall concept shines for what it is. So a lot of times they don't say, "Go for what you know." They know what they want you to go for, so they tell you what they want, and it's up to you to be professional enough to give them that.

RT: What are the qualities of a good producer?

NC: The first quality is to be able to get along with everyone you work with, where you obtain the greatest amount of creative input and performance from those people. The second thing is really capturing the concept of what the music is. The producer is the head musician—the bandleader—who can destroy or enhance the concept of any song at the changing of one or two things. So I think it's very important for the head honcho to remain in a state of great control at all times. The greatest producers I've worked with—Quincy is definitely one of them, as well as Kenny Rogers, Lionel Ritchie, Michael Jackson, and Maurice White. George Duke is a great producer. He allows you a lot of space because he calls you





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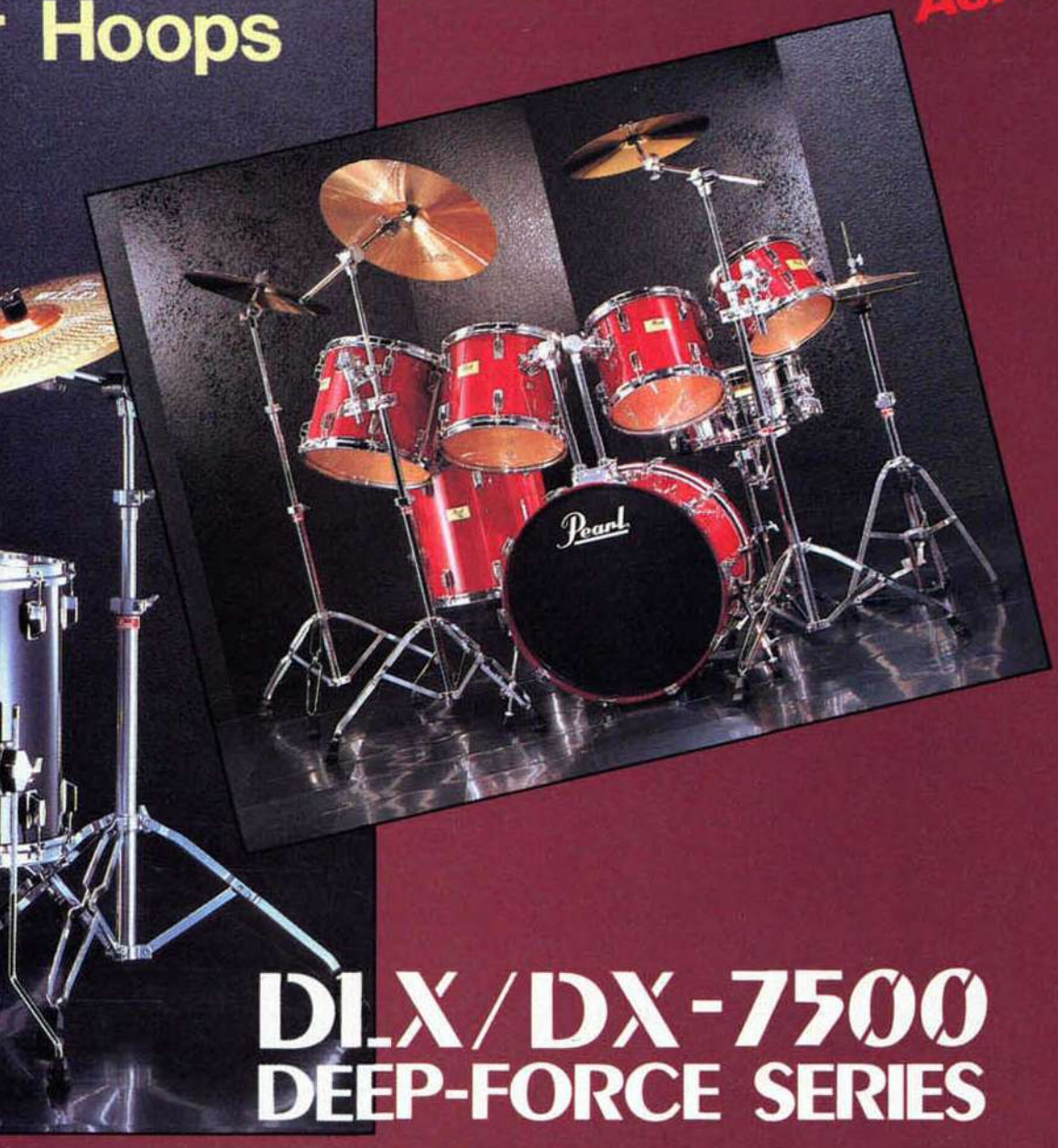

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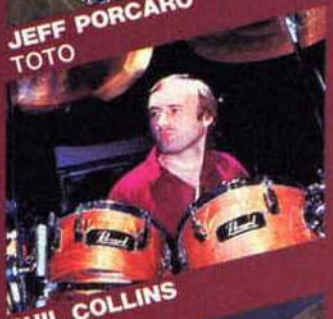

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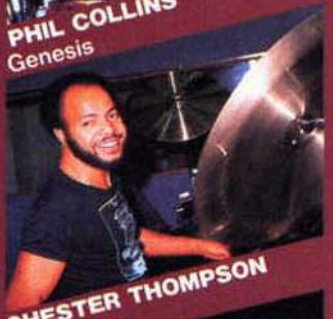

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RT: You've done a few records with Flora Purim. What sort of training do you have in Brazilian music?

NC: All I learned about Brazilian music was from reading, being exposed to some Brazilian people, and listening to records. I have a very extensive collection of true Brazilian music at home that I got from Brazil. I am a Milton Nascimento fanatic. I am very much in tune and really into Brazilian and African music, despite the fact that they're not really that commercial here in the United States. From a drumming standpoint, though, they're very important to the outcome of rhythm. In those countries, along with Puerto Rico, Cuba and Mexico, rhythm is the basis of all their music. Before melody there is rhythm, whereas in Europe and Japan it's the other way around. So I think most of my Brazilian training just came from being around the people and trying to absorb what they were feeling.

RT: How much is the click track or drum machine used in recording today?

NC: Now, 95%. On Michael Jackson's album, every track I played on I was overdubbing to Roger Linn. On most other sessions I do the same thing, or I have Roger Linn playing along with me, or I have a click track playing. Movie dates have a click track; commercial records have a drum machine. As a result, it has made me buy a drum machine and learn to program it. In fact, Reggie Andrews and I are doing an album with a funk band and there are no real drums. Every track is one or the other drum machine—Roger Linn or [Oberheim] *DMX* or Roland or a combination of all three, and it sounds incredible.

RT: A lot of drummers are going to have mixed feelings about that.

NC: You know what? I had mixed feeling too, but this is 1983. Just as there is Pac Man, Galaxians, Star Wars and all of that, there are drum machines. We've got to change. My main objective at this point, being that I've played what I've played with who I've played it, is to remain contemporary for the next ten years, so I have to do whatever I have to do to remain contemporary. Okay, if the drummers are complaining, jump on the bandwagon. Get a drum machine and program it. Put your sounds in the drum machine. It's still you. The instrument is just a vehicle for expression. It doesn't take the place of your own feeling, and once you get beyond that point you won't have any trouble adapting to whatever is happening. Okay, they're not using 20" bass drums anymore. Get a 22"; get a 24". Take the front head off it. It's still you. It sounds different but it's still you. Same licks. Grover Washington is still playing bebop but he's playing it on top of a simple commercial rhythm, so he's still Grover Washington. George Benson is still playing all the guitar he was playing 15 or 20 years ago. It's just that he sings now, and plays shorter solos, and they mean more. The checks mean a little more, too. That's the only difference, because we've also got to survive. Yeah, it's embarrassing for a lot of drummers, but at the same time, the drum machines will do two things: First, they will make any conscientious drummers go back and get their act together. Second, they will make the good drummers that much better because they'll be impeccable. I think in the last ten years, with the disco era and so forth, the level of musicianship has dropped drastically for drummers. We've got to bring that level back up. I like my drum machine. It's my newest toy. I don't feel intimidated by it because when they need Ndugu, they call Ndugu. Why call me when you've got a machine that'll do whatever you say as many times as you say it, won't get tired, and won't talk back? You know, it's also about economics.

RT: Is it easy to get burned out doing a lot of work in the studio?

NC: I used to have that problem, but I don't anymore. In the last three years I have just gotten control of my life as a person. Before, I was a workaholic, but as I've gotten older I've set various rules for myself. I don't work on weekends, and when I don't feel I will be able to do all the work that people call me for, and do it consistently at the level they assume I should be performing at, I've learned to say, "No." It's hard because it's so easy to be greedy and try to do everything. They respect it when you say "No." You

have to be your own disciplinarian, so that's what I do. If I get burned out now it's because I want to do it. If it's something that I really want to do'and it's challenging to me, I'll push myself, but I'm no longer controlled by the clock or the gun to think that I have to do it

RT: Who is the last drummer you lifted a lick from?

NC: I couldn't tell you, because I probably lifted licks from every one of them. I still listen now. I have a very extensive record collection, and I listen to everybody in all areas, so everything I hear really becomes part of me in someway, shape or form. I've lifted a lot of licks from Herbie Hancock. My main influence in terms of who I sounded like was Bruno Carr, but everybody who I've heard is responsible to some degree for what I play. They all play various styles of music and my whole thing is being universal in music and being able to play anything. That's one thing I stress to myself. To be able to play anything at the drop of a hat is being a total musician, and not a "jazz drummer," "funk drummer," "rock drummer," or whatever. Just a drummer; a percussionist; a musician.

RT: How did it come about that you did the *Mysterious Traveler* LP with Weather Report?

NC: Very strange [laughs]. I walked out of Paramount Recorders, where I was doing an album for Jean-Luc Ponty, and they were leaving rehearsal at Studio Instrument Rentals. They asked what I was doing and I told them about the album with Jean-Luc, and that I should be through on Friday. They said, "Okay, Monday come in the studio." So there again it was the changing of the guard. I went from a very technical and structured music with Jean-Luc to a very free-form improvisational music with Weather Report. I had to adapt to that right then and it was really fun. They don't talk a lot, they don't write a lot of music, they just let you go. So for me it was back to the basics. Believe it or not, that record did a lot for my career. Everyone was ready to abandon me as a creative playing percussionist because I had been working with Santana, and doing some of the things with George Duke. They were ready to say, "He's sold out. He can't play no more. He's a funkhead." The Weather Report album turned that whole thing back around. They said, "Hey, he's still got it, and *boy does* he still have it!"

RT: George Duke told me that you and he could tell what each other would play before you did it.

NC: Any time you spend over a year with a person it becomes like a marriage, musically. You live together, you play together, you hang out together. You start feeling and hearing the same thing. From the end of '71 till now we've been through some of the same musical situations at the same time. We, to a great degree, have been sympathetic to each other's cause. As a result we arrive at the same thing at the same time and it works. Just like now, he's producing a lot and so am I. It's only because we both grew as professional musicians together to the next level. We made the transitions at the same time.

RT: He said your hi-hat playing is the most sensitive he's heard.

NC: That comes from timbale playing. In timbale, your cowbell is basically your rhythmic instrument, and the one you play the fastest and play all the little tricks on. The drums are basically just kind of pivot points, so most of the things you do when you play rhythm on timbales are done with the cowbell, and that's with the right hand. So all I did was take all the cowbell stuff, put it on the hi-hat on drumset and paint a picture.

RT: Do you look at each part of the drumset as an individual instrument?

NC: The drumset is an orchestra, so yeah, each part of it is an instrument or section. I've got my drums set up in groups, so each one is a section. The three smaller tom-toms is one group. My two floor toms with the pedals is another group. The two *Roto-Toms* on the left is another section. The two tom-toms in front is another group. Each group has a different timbre, tonal characteristic and dynamic color, and I use them as such. I'm sure people at some point wonder why I only play a particular instrument in the kit once or twice. It's only that a section will lay out of a certain tune. On another tune that section is shining. All that equipment up

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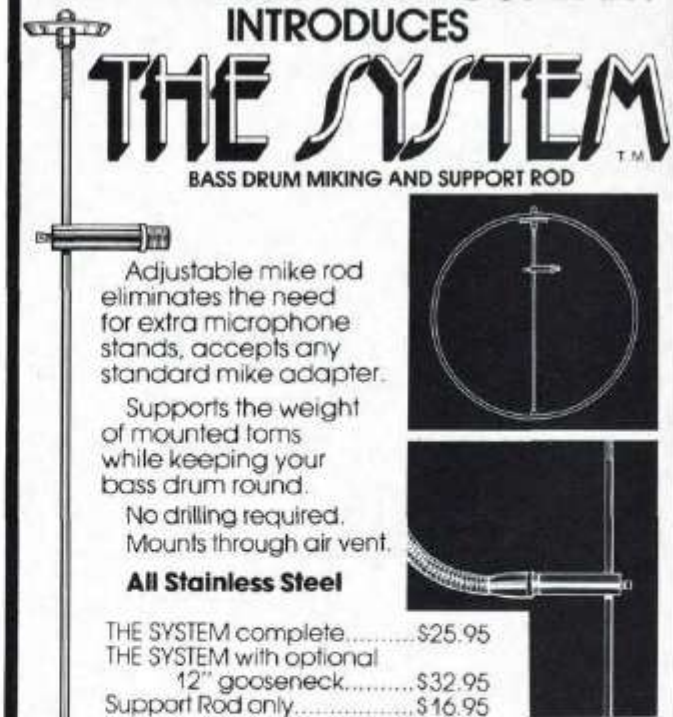

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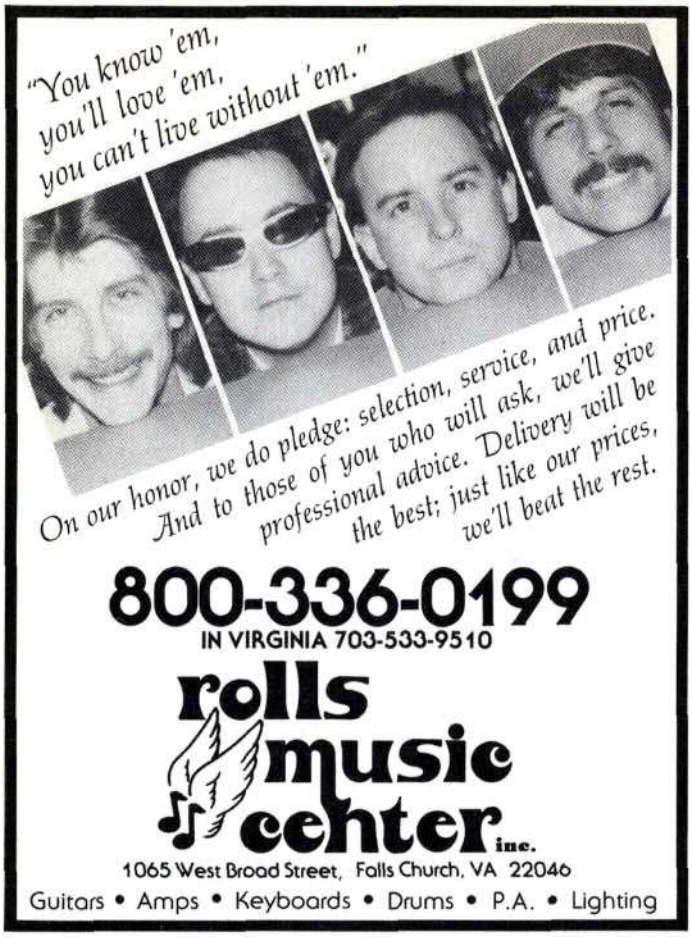
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there is only supposed to be used when it is functional for what you are doing.

RT: You have your own production company with Reggie Andrews. Is it a must for today's musicians to know the business of music? To be up on the industry?

NC: Oh definitely. Fifty percent of my day, every day, in Los Angeles is business, 35% of it is music, and the other 15% is recuperating to deal with the next day. We are in the music *business,* and the head title is the Entertainment Industry. It's very important to us, in order to survive and be successful, to deal with it as such. In a business, sometimes creativity and innovation have to take a back seat to whatever else is pressing. That's why, for us, it's very important to maintain a stable base in the business. For me, the key people that run my existence right now are my lawyers, accountants and PR people. This is before I create a note. They have control of my success at this point, but it only works in conjunction with the talent and creative feelings I have. The stability of the foundation comes from those key people. They have to work with each other and work with me, and I have to work with them along with working with the artists on the outside. So we really have to stay abreast of what's happening. You can't let a bad business deal or bad production decision blow you out to a point to where you don't function creatively. Or you can't let investing in an act and its not selling blow you out. That's business. It's creative but it's still business.

RT: What are your feelings about electronic drum stuff?

NC: I'm an electronic nut. The only thing now is, a lot of it is fad equipment. After Syndrums I got disillusioned with the success and longevity of electronic instruments in drumming. I used to buy everything that came out—Moog drums, Syndrums, Synare—I got into all that stuff, and now a lot of it is obsolete. Now the question in my mind is, "Will Simmons be obsolete?" I think the only stable thing to come out of the whole electronic era is the drum machines. They're here to stay. They will only be developed to greater peaks, greater consistency and quality, and will do more in the years to come. My emphasis right now is on enhancing and utilizing the drum machine in conjunction with playing the drums. Electronic drums, right now, are not really exciting to me because you can get synthesizers, if you know how to program them, to play the same things you can get on those electronic drums. I have four or five synthesizers at home. I don't even play the drum synthesizers anymore. On the keyboard synthesizers you can do your synthesized handclaps and the tom effects. So you can do that and, at the same time, stay in touch with theory, harmony and music. Looking at a piano keyboard is definitely more stimulating and inspiring than looking at four pads that won't do nothing if you don't plug them in.

RT: Who are the leaders in the new breed of drummers?

NC: Some of my favorite drummers at this point are Jeff Porcaro and Stevie Gadd, from a total standpoint. We're at a point now where all the music is starting to mesh together, so it's very important for the drummer to be able to play both sides of the fence. I think Jeff and Steve do a great job at that. Now, if you just start talking about innovation, then I naturally have to go back to Tony and Jack. I have to do that. Then go back to my inspirations, Stix, Bruno, Tootie Heath, Billy Hart, Art Taylor and all those kinds of drummers. But to be honest with you, right now, there aren't a lot of people out there who really have the depth and the background that's required to cross both sides of the fence. Harvey Mason does a great job. Harvey's not my favorite drummer, but he's in the top five. If I had to rate the top five drummers it would be Harvey, Jeff Porcaro, Stevie Gadd, myself, and the number five spot could be filled by Yogi Horton, Buddy Williams, Steve Jordon, Dennis Chambers and a number of others. I'm speaking from that total musical thing. I'm not just speaking of the drummer who makes all the hit records. That's not important to me, 'cause if you get into that you've got to include John Robinson and so forth, but from a drummer's standpoint, that ain't it. I look at the overall.

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Rufus "Speedy"

Jazz has often been called the true American classical music, finding its most immediate roots in the blues. Although the blues sang out against physical hardship and mental depression, its simple, haunting rhythms would most always convey a jubilance and spirit of optimism. The blues gave birth to the free-flowing spontaneity of jazz.

Rufus "Speedy" Jones has been a force in this metamorphosis, particularly in big bands, where his name was synonymous with excitement, rousing drum solos, solid dexterity and independence, and a unique approach to double bass drums.

He has worked with Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Lionel Hampton, Maynard Ferguson, (who billed Jones as "the most exciting drummer in the world") as well as with the Speedy Jones Quintet.

Lately, Speedy has turned his attention to writing, teaching, and performing on a limited basis, but the knowledge he's acquired through his musical odyssey makes him one of the most informative conversationalists I've had the chance to chat with.

"My first competitive audition was for the Buddy Johnson band. There were 15 drummers auditioning. I was the twelfth. I guess they decided to take me because my experience with Lionel Hampton had given me a good foot, a 'solid beat,' as they used to call it. You need that in a big band. Plus I had developed a good left hand for what we call the 'backbeat.' Also, I was very fast. For big band you need a big, solid beat with no fluctuation in time, just straight ahead."

Rufus "Speedy" Jones was one of a handful of drummers, at the time, who utilized two bass drums. I asked him how he began playing double bass drums. He drew a long breath, paused, and laughed a little. "I was playing with Maynard Ferguson. We had a gig in New Jersey and I was late. I walked in, looked up at the bandstand and saw a large drumset with two bass drums. I knew it wasn't my set and I said 'Oh, Lord. Someone's got my job!' I went over to Maynard and said 'Whose set is that?' and Maynard said, 'It's yours!' It was bigger than the one I used with Duke Ellington. It was frightening, but because I was nervous, I played more drums that night than I think I ever played. I played more, and I played faster and smoother.

"After that night I had to go back and practice. For some reason, I couldn't play like that afterwards. I decided to make two bass drums my thing. I enrolled at the gym and started working out with weights to develop strength in my left foot. You really have to be careful with two bass drums. You can really throw a band off if you don't use them correctly. You have the opportunity to play very intricately with two bass drums and that can mix everybody up. I use the double bass drums mostly on fills and try to limit its use. Coming out of a drum solo you have to be especially careful. Say you're coming out of a drum solo, you end up on the left bass drum and some of the band members are listening to the right bass drum for that 'one.' It can really throw them. Some musicians are very precise in the way they listen to time, and you can't expect the bass player to cover for you."

Although Jones would be the last one to describe himself as a disciplinarian in his approach to practice, his decision to use weight lifting and exercise for improving his bass drum technique is one that has "success" written all over it.

"Practice often and alone. Rehearsal is not practice. If you are practicing with someone standing in front of you, you are performing, not practicing.

"When I get up in the morning, my first instinct is to play. Basically, I practice what I feel. I use rudiments to keep moving, in a continuous flow, to leave myself open to see what ideas I can come up with. They sometimes happen before I know it. Rudiments are very important to know and you have to have a good working knowledge of them. They come in very handy, particularly when you're stuck for ideas. You can rely on a paradiddle in a situation like that.

"When you are practicing specific techniques, like crossing over or high stroke rolls, obviously you have to do it over and over again. You can't practice those techniques during a rehearsal because you hold back a little. You don't want to chance embarrassment at making a mistake. The only way to develop those techniques is through repetition. If you think there is another way, you're kidding yourself.

"I like to practice ideas with a firm understanding of the rudiments under my belt. Fit your ideas into patterns, and practice them over and over again. When you do, they become a part of you and come to you right at the best moment. For some reason, they will just kick in at the right time and you won't have to think about it. Each pattern will lead into something else in sequence. You can move from a quiet passage to something loud, and then to something showcase. If your physical and mental capabilities are aligned, then you can make it happen. There are times when your physical capabilities are exhausted. At other times, your mental capabilities will be exhausted. When they are both exhausted, you know you're in trouble and that's when rudiments can really bail you out."

Between his stay with Count Basie and Maynard Ferguson, Speedy Jones formed his own quintet. Years later, he was to resurrect that band once more. With his own group he got the opportunity to spread his wings a bit, and he could share the function of keeping time with the bass player.

"In big bands, playing bass drum was important. That's what most leaders were looking for—that consistent pulse/beat. In a small group, you don't have to be aware of playing bass drum as much. When I was developing, I always played bass drum because the drummers I admired did—Gene Krupa, Shadow Wilson, Kenny Clarke. Even Max Roach, when he was playing big band, played bass drum. When they started playing bebop, they just started playing puritan; right on the beats. Later, drummers started thinking in terms of bass drum and snare drum as a unit.'

Photo by Tom Copi

by Robert Barnelle

Jones

Photo by Tom Copi

The bass drum was used for fills. You'd hear the bass drum part once or twice and then you'd use the bass drum right alongside the rest of the drums. The loudness of the bass drum was no longer the factor. The only time you really heard the bass drum was at the end of a fill, and you'd hardly hear it again until the end of another fill. In the small group, the bass player took over the responsibility of playing straight time. When you had a good bass player, it meant that the drummer had to be very subtle, very cool. Then came modern jazz, and you got to play heavy because you were doing your thing. The bass player was doing his thing, too. He wasn't playing 'one' anymore. He was playing embellishments of chords. With jazz/rock, you can still hear the chords because the drummers are back to playing rhythm. It's a broken rhythm, but you can still hear the pulse. For a while it was moving into odd rhythms like 5/8 and 6/4, but if you don't have a knowledge of those rhythms, you can't do it. You're limited. Most jazz players like 4/4 time or waltz time. Those are time signatures they can open up on. 5/4 is hip, but going into something like 3/8, you just have to think about it too much. It's just mechanical. I really don't like the feel of many of the odd rhythms and I think the audience enjoys it less. Sometimes an audience will get lost on 3/4! They feel the simplicity of a rhythm. Most jazz musicians will tell you that jazz is *afeeling,* and to get that feeling, 4/4 is it. Next is 3/4, and 6/8 is good too if the melody is good and it's in a good key. Often, show tunes will be in these time signatures, but the band will always come back to 4/4 for that audience response. If a rhythm is too much for the artists themselves, how can you expect the audience to get to it?

"That's why you may find that in solos the audience will give you more response on exciting patterns than on the harder stuff. Even if it's not an *exciting* pattern, if it's a *simple* pattern and you stay on that for a while, your audience will applaud. However, if you play that same thing fast and it gets by them, then it's a lost cause.

"Take crossing over as an example. You can do a four-beat crossover twice, then go on to something else and the audience says, 'Hey, that was nice.' If you play that pattern three or four times in a row, you find the audience begins to applaud. It's something they can understand, and by that time, you have their attention. Speed is good to have too, but there are two sides to that story. You can play fast and go right past your audience. It's exciting to be able to play fast, but you have to play so that the audience can be a part of it, too. If you have a lot of ideas, break them down, and use them with discretion. Play those ideas so people can understand them.

"Don't forget that your job is to entertain, as well. Crossing over and high stroke rolls are done basically because they *look* good! I could play the same simple beat another way and make it *sound good,* but I never forget that it's a show. You do it to entertain, especially if you have a long solo. Old man Jo Jones used to cross over from the sock cymbal to the floor tom-tom. He got a really tight sound. I watched that for a while, and then went home and stole it! Then I started putting the snare drum into it, and later I saw Buddy Rich using the snare drum, too.

"I' ll tell you a little secret about crossing over. If you're not physically geared for it that night, your hands can collide. Sticks start flying everywhere. You get a stick airborne and there you are playing with one hand, smiling like nothing's wrong. People say 'Wow, that was beautiful!' and you know it was just a big mistake. You cover up, apply a little showmanship and somebody gets a souvenir!

"I was always a showman. For some reason, I just played with excitement and the people felt it too. People want excitement. I have Maynard Ferguson to thank for billing me as the most exciting drummer in the world because, for me, drums is it.

"After Maynard put me on the map, any band I'd go into would want me to play like that. So even if other players didn't like me getting applause, I'd know I was getting paid to play solos and make the show more exciting. The only band I had trouble with in this respect was Buddy Johnson's. Buddy fired me because he felt I was stealing the show. Then in Lionel Hampton's band there was this young boy who felt I was playing my solos too hard, and he'd give me dirty looks and all that. I'd be spinnin' sticks with Lionel, and when he'd point to me, I'd just play wild! I was just that type of guy. When I played, I played to satisfy the people, and a bandleader can't ask for any more than that.

"Most of the time I'd slow the pace down a little, after a climax. Then I'd start up again to a *second* climax. Next I'd look up at the bandleader and he'd bring the band back in. I'd end on a big bang and the audience loved it, although they never knew what was going on. With musicians like Duke Ellington and Count Basie, it was second nature to bring solos in and out. Then there were times when I'd open a solo and have to play it over again because the other musicians wouldn't come in! They'd be laughing and applauding, and I'd be yelling 'Come on in!' However, I'd be playing loud and they couldn't hear me. They'd think I was talking to myself or something. Most of the time the band members would enjoy each other's solos.

"The opportunity to be creative can excite an artist and you can draw ideas from your own excitement. It's just naturally conveyed to the audience. Playing a figure by accident might excite you. I shouldn't say 'accident.' It's more like you wanted to do something else and it didn't come out quite the way you wanted it to. You might want to play it again because it sounded better than what you had planned. That can excite you. It's knowing what you're going to play and playing it with feeling, from within. You have to have talent to play a solo. You have to know how to ap-

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Photo by Lissa Wales

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proach it. Every musician builds solos upon ideas, with one idea leading into another. With ideas, you can play all night and not repeat yourself. You can repeat yourself in the use of certain rudiments, but those rudiments can be embellished upon from time to time. Even a roll can be played so many different ways! You've got to change your patterns, too, otherwise it can be a bore. You can't be bored and creative at the same time, but patterns are sometimes good to have. You can use a pattern until you're sure that the band can go along with anything you substitute. Sometimes you'll try to substitute something, and it's the wrong time or the wrong environment. It'll throw the whole thing off. It might be misinterpreted.

"Usually, by the time it was my turn to solo, I would have been listening to each player carefully; listening to it build. By the time it got to me, I'd know just what I was going to play. I'd play my solos and know I was doing it to make the band sound better and to excite the audience."

When an artist identifies with creative liberty; spontaneity; excitement, how does he approach the all and often too confining situation of reading charts? "If you have chops, you can look at a chart and make the interpretation of it. You can memorize it if you have the ability to do so. I take a look at a chart and make a concept in my mind about it, listen to the entry, how the saxophones are first going down, the trumpets, the reeds, because there will be spaces within where I must be complementary. I keep the chart in mind, but there are fills and things I will hear that will not be on that chart. Still, I know those shadings will sound good. I do a great deal of shading. You see, a lot of very good arrangers don't know how to write for drums. I'm not putting down good writers, but a good drummer can play what's on the chart and add what he hears without losing something. After all *he's* the one playing and *he's* the one who has to sell the music. He should be able to put in what he hears. You have to feel free with what you're doing. If it's jazz, it has to be free flowing. It can't sound stiff. Everyone has to be relaxed. It has to be tasteful. It has to be felt. Some players rely on charts for everything. A drummer can't do that. He's got to listen to what's going on around him, play his part to the surroundings, be fitting."

The big bands are gone. Though the era is behind us, the music will always feel "contemporary" to the discerning ear. With the passing of big band music as a dominant force in molding today's budding drummers, we find ourselves somewhat empty-handed, especially when we consider the cornucopia of ideas and techniques used by drummers in those "good old days"—the machine-gun rapid fire of Gene Krupa's rim shots, the cool and breezy sounds of circling brush strokes on the snare, the patterns on the hi-hat that so often embellished the drum solos. The drum solo itself is not one of the high points of a show as was the case in years gone by. Are these techniques gone forever, or just lying dormant in hopes that a more resourceful generation of drummers will come forth, blow the dust off some of the old manuals and resurrect those techniques once more?

"Well, brushes, for example, are practically never used anymore. You cannot use brushes on hard rock. We used brushes a lot in a big band when we wanted the drums to be felt and not heard. The approach to the drums today is to be loud. The backbeat—that's what people want today! Some of it's good; some of it isn't. A lot of players don't know these techniques, so they cannot make a judgment about how or when they can use them. You see, a brush is an altogether different technique from a stick. You get no bounce from a brush. I used to get a little bounce from a brush by pulling the strands in about halfway and putting tape around it. Then it sounds a lot like a stick, but you can adjust it the way you want.

"We used to use the cymbals differently, too. We used to open and close our cymbals a lot. If the cymbal is one with a lot of give, if it's paper thin, then a strong player can almost feel the give. If it's thick, naturally you'll get a lot more bounce, a lot more 'ping' and a deader sound. On the sock cymbal, the floor cymbal, if you play it and close it, you'll get a lot more bounce than by pressing it. If you play it open, you can get more of a press-roll sound by press-

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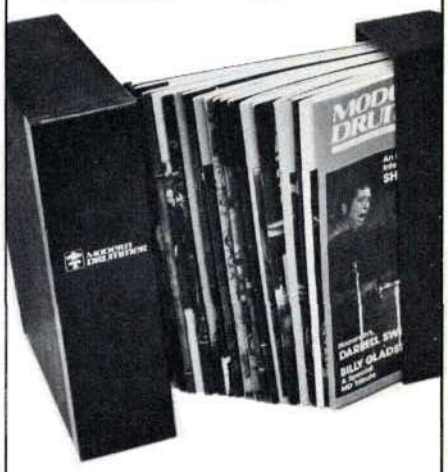

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ing the stick. It's a lot smoother and you can develop that, but when you close the cymbal, you can almost hear all the beats individually. Most of the old players do stuff like that. Rim shots are hardly ever used anymore either. You don't even see that many drummers playing solos today. You don't see that many fills. What a bandleader wants to know from a drummer today is, can he keep a good beat? Can he back up a singer? Can he maintain a strong backbeat? A drummer goes to an audition today and they ask him, 'Can you sing?' In big band, your job is to keep time, play fills, solos, do openings and closings. It's a whole different approach today."

In the year 1969, Rufus "Speedy" Jones was riding the crest of success. He'd been all over the world as a performer, working with the greatest names in big band history. He toured the Soviet Union with the Duke Ellington Orchestra. A tight-knit group of Russian drummers began to gravitate towards Speedy, and donned him yet another nickname, "Mr. Boom-Boom," because he used two bass drums. Speedy noticed that, little by little, they all began to convert to the matched grip, which Speedy was using almost exclusively at the time. Matched grip felt more natural to Speedy. "It's the way you pick up the sticks" he says, accentuating the obvious. "It's the way I hold them." He became more and more dependent upon matched grip for reasons he held secret. Weakness and pain began to seep into his arms through his wrists and into his hands. Some days it was worse than others. Arthritis was to eventually steal away the only life Speedy ever knew, that of a pro drummer.

"I was on cloud nine. I really was. I'd be up on the bandstand and I wouldn't even know I was there. I wasn't high. I'd be playing and the show would come to a close. I'd say, 'Is it over?' I wanted to do it again. I never really drank. I was never on dope. I was high on the music. I'd be playing drum solos all night long and the guys would say to me, 'Wasn't it hot up there?' It would be hot, but I didn't notice. We'd play one concert after another, ride the bus, and get up in the morning with not enough sleep. I did that all my young life. I didn't know it, but I was tearing my body down bit by bit. When I got arthritis I went from 196 pounds to 118 pounds. At the time it seemed like fate took everything away from me, but I can't blame it on fate because I wasn't aware of what to do to keep a body healthy. I believe that, had I lived differently, I might not have arthritis today because I believe that arthritis can come from worry—and I was a chronic worrier—along with stress and the wrong foods. However, I did enjoy it while I was up there; while I was doing it."

Talking about his affliction with arthritis revealed a side of Speedy that was deeply reflective, almost philosophical. In a reverie he spoke of the "old days." Leaning back in his chair, he seemed to be having a private conversation with himself, trying to reconcile what he later described to me as having "two good lives." He stood as an example of what every young, ambitious drummer could reach for. However, he said he would have done it differently. This made me wonder what advice he might lend to an admirer of the life he had as an accomplished professional.

"The first thing I'd say is forget about making it big. If you're that good and it's in the cards for you to make it big, you probably will and no one can stop it. However, I say first prove to yourself that you are a drummer. Everyone who merely wants to be a drummer may not have that quality. Then, on the other hand, if you have that quality, it probably will become known. First, you have to satisfy yourself, even in rehearsal. If you can't, forget it. You see, I play better and enjoy myself more practicing. In practice, I can do anything I want to do. You're trying to reach the people. That's the difference. If a student comes to me and says, 'I want to make it big,' I say 'Prove to yourself you can play first!' Couple that with your ability to reach an audience and you've got a chance at making it big. There's such a thing as 'luck,' too. That can make you big. I'm going to tell you a little secret. In my time, I was afraid of my being black. It made me go through a lot of things. I wanted to change my color and the texture of my hair because I wanted to be more in the public eye, like a Gene Krupa. I felt, being black, I couldn't have it. People would say 'You're black! You're a do-nothing!' It was discouraging to me. I'd say to myself, 'You're well liked,' but still it messed me up. Blacks have tried to express in their music, 'Hey! I can do something, too!' Each body of people, each race, wants to be recognized. In our society, you just can't keep them down. If someone comes forth and says 'You're black, you're a Jew, or whatever; you can't do this,' somehow that person *is* going to do it. That's what happened in our country. The law said that all men were created equal, but in some minds, that didn't apply to blacks. Using that ideology now, most young people can go anywhere and do anything they want, if you have the facility and the ability. You have the opportunity to express yourself in America. There are white people with genius; there are black people with genius. I feel that if a man has developed the urge to learn, he can learn anything he wants to. However, realize that if you don't come forth and take this opportunity to express yourself, you will fall short of many things years down the line. Also, at some point in society, your offspring will be just like you. When you have something to offer that is from you alone, it causes people to recognize you. You never know what a man has to offer until you sit down with him and delve into what he knows."

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by Roy Burns

Drumming and Discouragement

Most of us get frustrated and discouraged at one time or another. It is difficult to keep your spirits up when there are no jobs in sight. Furthermore, it is difficult to keep practicing and rehearsing when your career is moving slowly.

Parents

As if this were not tough enough, there are always those who would discourage you. Sometimes it can be one or both parents. This is perhaps the toughest problem to deal with. If your parents have no contact with the music business, it is easy to see why they might have negative feelings about your becoming a musician.

Perhaps the best way to deal with this problem is to explain to them that you are really serious about music. Taking lessons, taking music and/or business courses at a local college, or taking care of responsibilities such as work or school can sometimes overcome their objections. Many people have helped to pay their way through college by playing music and this helped to relieve the strain on the family budget.

If you are taking lessons, have your drum teacher meet with your parents. If you are taking high school or college music courses, arrange a meeting with the teacher to help your parents understand. Show them industry magazines (such as *Modern Drummer)* to help them gain a perspective on the music business.

Be honest with them. The music business is tough, and you must be talented and well trained to survive in it. Each family will have to work this difficulty out for itself and it isn't always easy. It might help to point out to them that more people are making money in the music business than ever before.

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Bitter Musicians

Older musicians can become disappointed and very negative when their careers have not lived up to their hopes and dreams. In their disappointment, they sometimes discourage young players by making comments such as: "It's a lousy business"; "There's no money in it"; "Grow up and get a job that's more secure"; "Just play as a hobby"; and last of all, "You don't have it. You will never make it because you don't have the talent." This is just "Misery loves company," as the old saying goes. They couldn't make it so they do not want you to make it either.

Jealous Drummers

Occasionally, older drummers will say things to younger players that are discouraging. Sometimes they are envious and scared. Sometimes they hope to upset you, assuming that you won't play well if you are disturbed. Sometimes they have an ego problem.

This obstacle is easier to handle because you only have to please yourself and the musicians you play with. You don't have to please frustrated, jealous or out-of-work drummers.

Know-It-All Types

Some musicians want to impress you with how much they know about the business. They often try to suggest that they have "inside" contacts. They may even say things like "Play like so and so or you will never make it."

Although contacts are important, you must play well to take advantage of them and, in the long run, it is how well you play that makes or breaks your career. Also, be suspicious of anyone who pretends to have *all* the answers. People like this seldom can back up what they say.

Honesty & Determination

Be honest with yourself as to what your chances of being a successful drummer really are. It is great to be determined to make it as a drummer. However, remember that there are approximately three million drummers in America alone. That's a lot of competition. Don't kid yourself that you can just "feel it" and go right to the top. In fact, most of today's really top drummers are well-trained musicians who understand their strengths and weaknesses. They have also done a lot of hard work to get to the top.

Risk

My personal feeling is that if you don't try you will never know if you could have done it. Better to have tried and failed than not to have tried at all. I hasten to add that this is my personal feeling only. This is a decision each person has to make alone.

There is a risk in any career. There are *no* guarantees in life. Each person must go through the various phases on the road to success in his or her own way.

Satisfaction

When you get really discouraged, try to remember why you began playing the drums. "Because it is fun" is the most common response. "I love music and drumming" is another one. In other words, playing music gives us a special satisfaction that a regular nine-to-five job might not.

When I get discouraged, I listen to music. No matter what my mood, the music will usually bring me out of it. Listening to a great drummer play live will also inspire me. When someone is playing really well, it is easy to forget your troubles and get involved in the music.

"Involved" is the key word. We only become involved in something that is interesting, stimulating and satisfying. So, remember all the satisfaction you have already derived from music and drumming. This will remind you to keep your spirits up, and to keep practicing, learning and developing, even when things are not going well.

One Last Thought

A young man asked an extremely successful individual. "Can you give me the formula for success?" The person replied, "There is no such formula because success is different for each person. However, I can give you the formula for failure: try to please everyone!"

Some people will never say, "Good job, that sounded really fine." They are too discouraged themselves. Don't worry about pleasing these types. Just play as well as you can, keep learning all the time and enjoy it. If you are really good, you will get your chance sooner or later.

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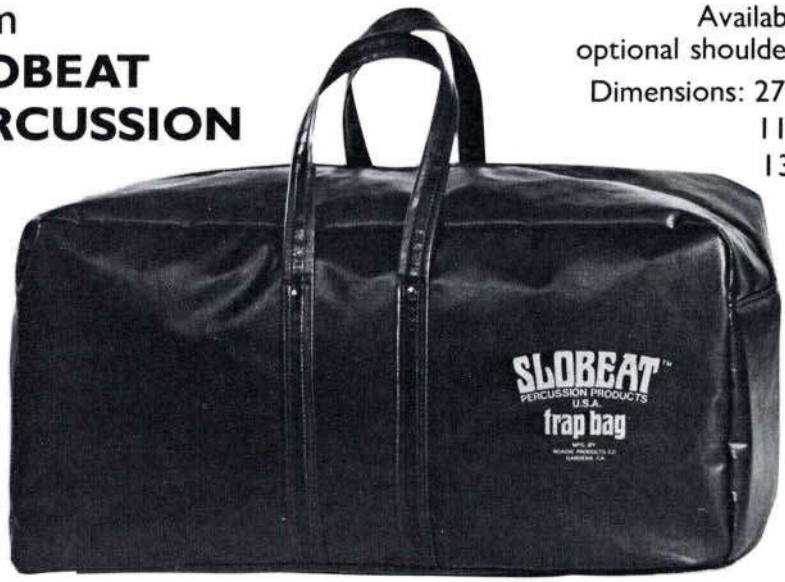

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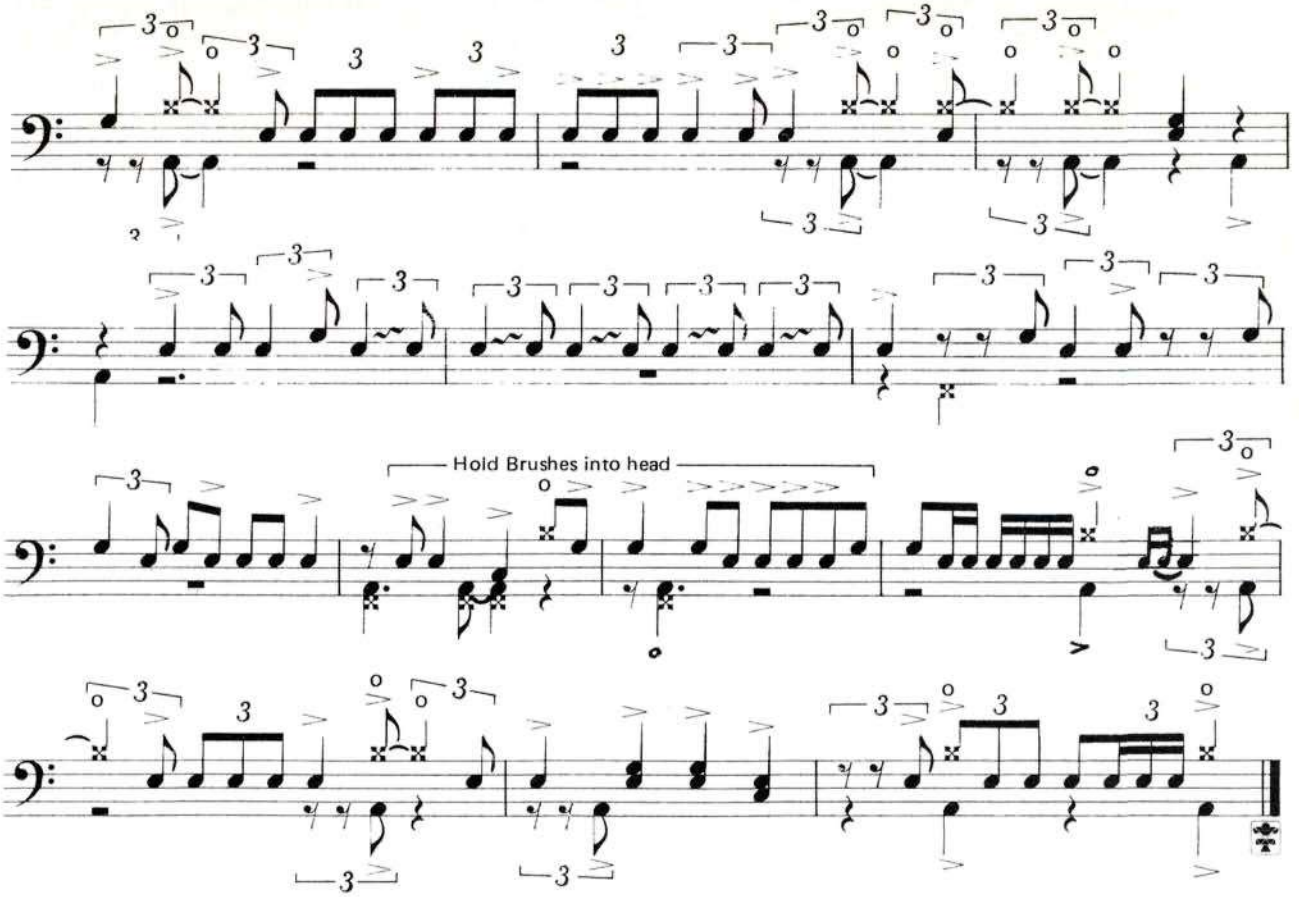

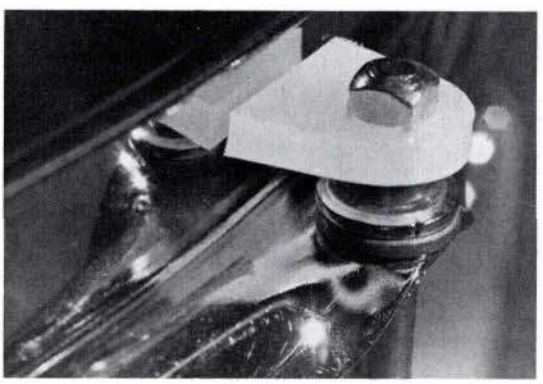

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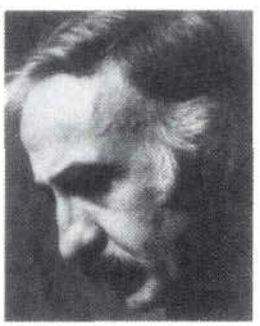

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by James E. Murphy

Establishing a Teaching Practice

Before you start a teaching practice, there are a few important factors you should consider: What are your qualifications? Do you have a sufficient musical background; a degree; any college experience? Do you teach a few students already? Have you ever taught before? Have enough people expressed an interest in taking lessons from you to warrant your own practice? While these questions may seem a bit strong, they're all serious considerations for the would-be teacher.

If you feel you're qualified to teach others, the next question is, at what level? Beginner, intermediate, advanced, or all of these? Can you teach jazz, rock, fusion, reading, rudimental, technique, etc.? You may wish to specialize in one, or a few of these areas.

Finally, do you know your material *well enough* to teach someone else? If not, you should work on your teaching style and format before you start taking on students. Of course, you'll most likely modify your approach as time goes on by adding or subtracting items as needed, but the point is, you never want to teach material you're unsure of, or still learning yourself. This confuses both you and the student.

There are also what I call *inner qualifications:* patience, personality, understanding, the ability to explain things simply, and, most important, a love for the subject matter. Remember, you're dealing with individuals who *want* to learn and have come to you because they feel you *want to* teach them.

Setting Up Shop

The major consideration here is space. If you're only taking on one student, your house or apartment may work out just fine. However, consider the noise factor and the neighbors. You may have to modify a closet, basement, or den to fit your needs.

If you're taking on several students, your home or apartment may not be large enough. You may have to obtain studio space outside your home in a good business area. The studio should be in a good location, with as good a physical appearance as possible.

Once you've determined how many practice rooms you'll need, you must then decide on their size. There should be sufficient space in each room for you, the student, a music stand, and whatever drumming equipment you plan to use. If your plan is to teach one student at a time, you can probably get away with your present equipment. However, if you're planning to teach more than one student at a time, either in a group, or in separate practice rooms or booths, you'll need to have extra snare drums, pads, or full drumsets, depending on what you plan to teach.

Be sure there is proper lighting in every teaching area so that lesson material can be read easily. Recommended light for home reading is 60 to 100 watts of incandescent light. You must remember, however, that your teaching studio rooms may be larger than the average room, have a higher ceiling, or little or no natural light. If you have this problem, consider adding more fixtures or increasing wattage.

You should also consider proper ventilation. Teaching rooms shouldn't be stuffy or stale. Fresh, circulating air should flow through the room to keep it comfortable. Windows will add to the lighting, as well as the ventilation. If your teaching rooms don't have windows, then fans or air conditioning may be required.

If noise levels are a factor, you'll probably need to treat your teaching rooms to suppress noise. Insulation batting in the walls and ceiling should be enough, but if it's not, there are several items you can use to help dampen your rooms further. The ceiling may be treated with acoustical tiles, egg cartons, carpet, or even burlap. Walls can be treated with carpeting, cloth, or baffles. The floor can be carpeted. Whatever treatments you apply, be sure they are neat and professional looking.

Your studio should also have a pleasant atmosphere. A few coats of paint will help keep the room from looking gloomy and will add to the lighting factor. Have items of interest around the studio to help hold the students' attention and arouse their curiosity. Things like unusual percussion instruments, music and drum magazines, sticks and pads, new product information, photos of famous drummers, or even exercises you think your students might be interested in will serve this purpose.

One device you may wish to use as a teaching aid is a combination VCR (video cassette recorder) and video camera. A filmed record of your students can be used to detect errors in sticking, grip, posture, etc. The VCR will detect things you may not see during the lesson. After each lesson, or at the end of the day when all lessons are completed, you can rerun the tape, making note of items you have missed during the actual lessons. You could also spend a session going over the video tape with your students and making suggestions on ways they can improve. This is an excellent means of giving students an opportunity to actually see what they are doing wrong. If your students can see their mistakes, they will be more apt to make a determined effort to correct them.

You may also wish to use your VCR as a teaching aid through the use of pre-recorded tapes by professional drummers. Steve Gadd, Lenny White, Bernard Purdie, Bill Bruford, Louie Bellson, and many others now have video tapes available at prices ranging from $50 to $100. Some larger music stores or drum shops may even have a rental system you can use.

Staying Organized

One of the first considerations in staying organized is determining how many students you can handle efficiently. Are you the only teacher, or will there be others working with you? It's best to limit yourself to a set number of students each week. Once your teaching schedule is organized, you'll better be able to decide how many students you're capable of handling. If in doubt, take on students gradually.

Set up an appointment schedule to keep yourself organized. Use an appointment book, calendar, or teaching schedule chart, and mark the following information on it: *(I) Student's name, address, and phone number; (2) Lesson time; (3) What will be done in each lesson; (4) Any special material the student may need.*

If several students are being taught, it's often a good idea to keep a running file of their progress, their strong and weak points, and any other information you feel may be helpful. You may also wish to note their special interests in this file. They may express an interest in learning the styles of Peart, Gadd, or Bruford, for example, and you should try to work a little of these styles into each lesson. If your students have a few of these special items in each lesson, along with the mandatory items, it will help to hold their interest.

What To Charge

This is a personal matter which you'll have to decide on your own; however, your fee *should* be based on your playing or teaching experience, your background,

your ability, and even what the competition is charging. If your teaching practice is to be your only source of income, obviously you must clear a profit to support yourself and your business. However, don't overcharge and run yourself out of business.

If you're well known in your area, then naturally, your prices can be higher. How much higher is based on the demand for your teaching and how much your students are willing to pay for your service.

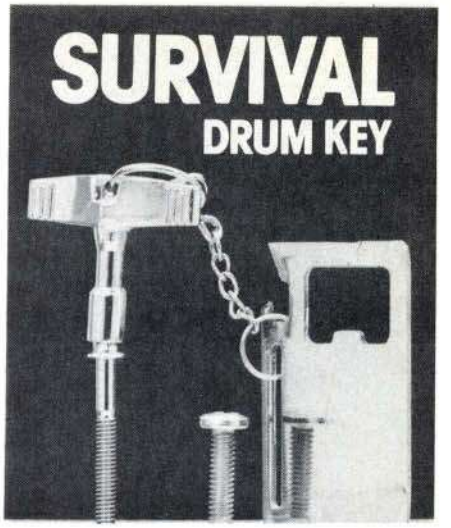
A recent survey conducted in the Indiana, Ohio, and Kentucky tri-state area revealed average prices for drum instruction as follows: *Beginners: $4.00 to $5.00 per 1/2 hour; Intermediate: $5.50 to $6.00 per 1/2 hour; Advanced: $6.50 to $8.00 per 1/2 hour.* Be sure to check out the going rates in your own area before making a decision. Remember, you can always start with a slightly lower rate and increase it. It's rarely a good idea to do it the other way around.

Promoting Your Practice

There are several ways to advertise your teaching practice to the public. The Yellow Pages and the classified section of the newspaper are both good sources. You should also have business cards printed with your name, address, and phone number. This is one of the most inexpensive ways to begin promoting your business. If you can afford to spend a little more, you might choose to have flyers or two-page brochures printed which state your past musical experiences, teaching background, and any other information you feel is important to prospective students. All these items may help a student decide between you and another teacher. Don't advertise falsely, but don't be afraid to publicize your true credentials either.

If you're just starting a new practice, you may wish to hold either an "open house" or an "introductory special." This will let people know you're out there, and give them a chance to meet you on an informal basis. If you plan to teach younger students, this is a great opportunity to meet with their parents and establish a good relationship early in the game.

With a little thought, you should be able to put together a teaching practice that's just right for you and your students, and you may soon begin to turn out the drum stars of tomorrow.



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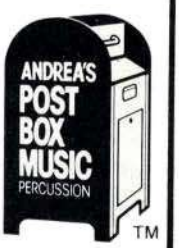

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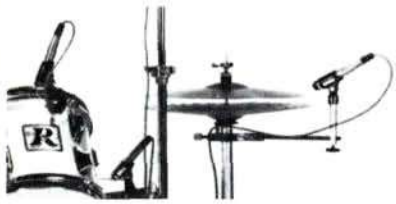

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Genealogy continued from page 19

stantinople? We have mentioned that Kerope had ten daughters. Akabi Zildjian married one Mikhail Dulgaryian, and they had two sons, Mikhail and Kerope (and a daughter, Clementine), both of whom came into the family business. Sister Filor Zildjian married a Yuzbashian and had a son, Vahan Yuzbashian, who was to run the company's business office for a while.

Kerope, born April 11, 1914, today lives in a white house across the road from the Sabian factory, but for many years in Turkey he was in charge of production in the K. Zildjian cymbal foundry, specifically the hand-hammering. In halting English, he explains that even he is unable to make sense of this garbled family tree. "Too many people, too confusing," he laughs, shaking his head. "My brother, Mikhail," he continues, "is oldest. I no have formula. Mikhail learn the formula from our Aunt Victoria. She keep the factory running for many, many years because she was eldest sister, and Aram not around. I think she die in 1920s—cannot remember year. I think she also teach formula to Aram."

Truth be told, whether Aram learned the formula from his late Uncle Kerope or from his Aunt Victoria, it is apparent that he was not alone in this knowledge. "After World War I," Robert recollects, "Aram was in Bucharest, Roumania. Mikhail Dulgaryian followed him up there to join him in the business, because Aram was the number one guy, but they got into some sort of blowup. Mikhail went bonkers, tore up the foundry, wrecked the machinery, and returned to Istanbul, where the day-to-day management of the company was being handled by Yakko Toledo, a partner in the export firm of Toledo & Ahrenstein. Toledo ran the operation in Istanbul in the '20s, and Mikhail went in with him. At this point Aram decided to hand down the process to my father, who (as a grandson of Avedis Zildjian) was a direct descendant of the older brother, while Mikhail (as a grandson of the younger brother Kerope—on his mother's side) was not."

Where was Robert Zildjian's father at this time? In America. Born December 6, 1888, Avedis Armand Zildjian was the son of Haroutian Zildjian and the nephew of Aram Zildjian. He had apprenticed in cymbal-making as a boy, but the business held little interest for him, and as it seemed highly unlikely that the succession would ever pass to him (his father, you'll remember, had let it pass to brother Aram in 1909), he pursued other interests. "Like so many young Armenians of the time," Robert points out, "my father didn't want to go into the army. The political climate in Turkey was always hostile for Armenians, so in 1908 when he got a chance to chaperon a rich Armenian family's son to America, he jumped at the opportunity."

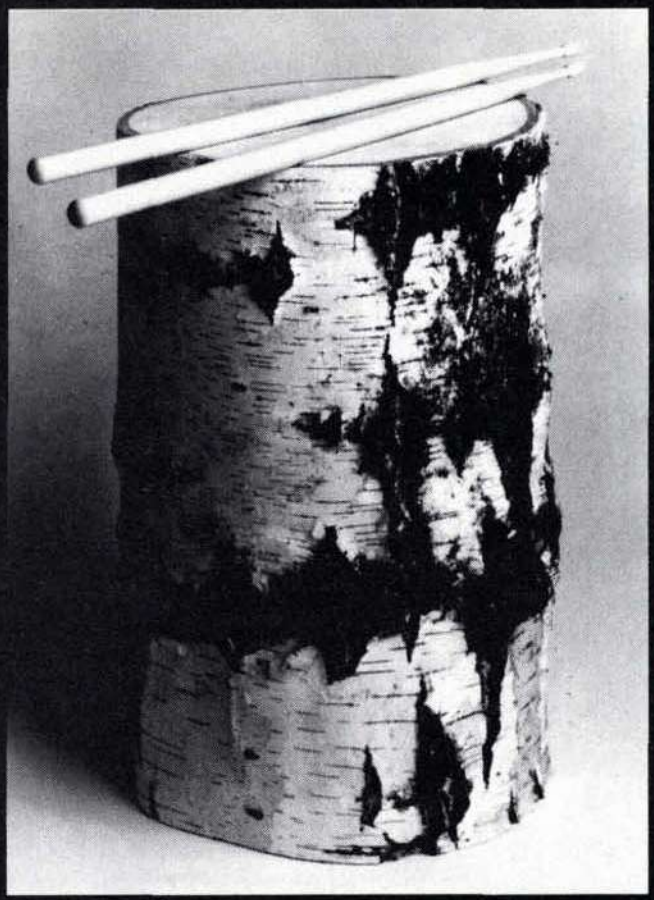
Avedis Armand Zildjian settled in the Boston area, set up a successful candy business, and married a girl of solid Yankee stock, Alice "Sally" Goodale, who gave him two sons, first Armand and then Robert (born, he proudly points out, on Bastille Day, July 14, 1923). Then in 1927, he received a letter from his Uncle Aram in Bucharest, informing him that the time had come for him to return to his homeland and claim his birthright. Avedis wrote back to his uncle and told him that, as there already existed a tremendous potential market for cymbals in the U.S., Aram should instead come to Boston, which, in the autumn of his life and speaking no English, Aram did. Thus in 1929, Aram retrained his nephew in the family process, and the art of cymbal casting, rolling and hammering. The Avedis Zildjian Co. began making hand-made musical instruments for the burgeoning jazz marketplace. Through his contact with great drummers like George Wettling, Gene Krupa, Ray Bauduc, Chick Webb, Sid Catlett and Jo Jones, Avedis Zildjian evolved his family's instruments to better accommodate the playing styles of the American swing era.

There was, however, a fly in the ointment which was to plague Avedis for most of his life, and its ultimate resolution inadvertantly led to Sabian Ltd.

The American market had over the years gradually become the main source of demand for Turkish (er . . . Armenian) cymbals, but with the tremendous distances between manufacturer and consumer, and the time lag in custom making orders for delivery, coverage was very ineffective. So in 1926, Aram Zildjian signed an agreement with Fred Gretsch Sr., and around the same time, Yakko Toledo did likewise. The net result was that the Fred Gretsch Co., in addition to becoming the exclusive distributor in America for Zildjian cymbals, ended up owning the trademarks *K. Zildjian, A. Zildjian* and *Zildjian.*

So Avedis Armand Zildjian began his U.S. cymbal-making business on a sour note, outflanked as it were by Gretsch on one side and by the K. Zildjian Co., of Istanbul and the descendants of Kerope Zildjian, on the other; these were, after all, *the authentic* Turkish Zildjians that discerning drummers had been playing for years. But Avedis Zildjian Co. cymbals had an advantage that would ultimately make them the pre-eminent force in the marketplace. That was proximity to America's great urban centers and to its leading musicians.

"If my father hadn't listened to retailers like Bill Maither, and drummers like Gene Krupa and Jo Jones, he might still be making clunkers—thick, heavy cymbals that you couldn't ride or phrase on. People who are trying to deify my father will never



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understand that he didn't develop the stuff. It finally came *through* him, and thank God he was open enough to listen to the musicians, to turn their needs and suggestions into good musical instruments. And by the end of the '30s, after Aram returned to Europe and the original factory burned down, my father was able to design a new space in Quincy, Mass, that incorporated all his ideas about using machines to do the heavy work."

Meanwhile, back in Turkey, the descendants of Kerope Zildjian were continuing to make cymbals entirely by hand, far from the weaning influence of jazz musicians, against a backdrop of intense change. In 1921, Turkey became—ostensibly—a republic, and by 1935, as Kerope recalls it, "Everyone had to change names; Turkish, Greek, Armenian, Jew. They say there can be no more names ending in -ian sound, because most Armenian names end in -ian. And they say, everyone must have birth certificate."

Kerope's eldest son, Gabriel (born September 29, 1941)—one of the hand hammerers from Istanbul, now head of product testing and quality control for Sabian—explains that, "My Uncle Mikhail, as head of the family, went to the government to get a birth certificate, and because he couldn't use the -ian, he picked *Zilcan,* which sounds like Zildjian in Turkish. *Zil-* means cymbal and *-can* is the big bell. You see, my Uncle Mikhail handled the business after Aram left Roumania to start the American company with Bob's father, Avedis. He inherited the company, and the change from Dulgaryian to Zilcan was made because they wanted to make it more like it was the ongoing family and because there was nobody left in Turkey from the Avedis Zildjian side of the family. So whoever inherited the company was from my grandmother Akabi (Zildjian) Dulgaryian'sside."

In 1941, Kerope Zilcan narrowly escaped being killed in a political massacre. Then, the company was dealt an economic blow in the form of a special income tax. It was only through the financial intervention of Yakko Toledo's son-in-law, Sali Kovo, that the K. Zildjian Co. was saved. Kovo, in effect, became the owner and general-manager. It was in this form that Mikhail and Kerope Zilcan continued to produce K. Zildjians.

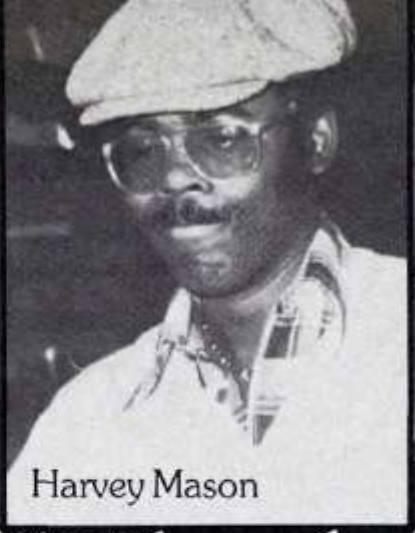
In 1951, Avedis Zildjian Co. finally won back the rights to the trademark *A. Zildjian* from the Fred Gretsch Co. In 1955, they pressed the issue in another suit to try and get the *Zildjian* trademark back, protesting that nobody in Turkey had the right to make a Zildjian. Mikhail Zilcan flew over as a witness for Gretsch to substantiate their claim that it wasn't the same product, and a jury of musicians decided that A. Zildjian and K. Zildjian cymbals were different instruments, so the old Gretsch contract stood.

All this time in America, Armand and Robert Zildjian had been learning their father's trade, and though Armand was the eldest, Avedis Zildjian insisted that both his sons be in the business. He taught them both the secret Zildjian process. "I never had any choice, that's for sure," Robert laughs. "Armand and I did a lot of research into the relationship between the width of the cup and the bow of the cymbal, and we eventually discovered ways of doing things that became the industry standard." But all this time, K. Zildjian was a burr in their backside. "I had import figures which showed that Paiste was our legitimate competition and was cutting into our sales, but my father was just obsessed with K. Zildjian. So finally around 1963, I told him, 'Look, you're going to Istanbul. Why don't you go talk to Kovo, who owns all the machinery and trademarks, and find out if he'd like to sell.' But my father went in there with his dukes up, got into a terrific argument and nothing was discussed. So Tony Wallace, who worked for Percussion S.A. (our European distribution company), and I began negotiations."

Finally, in 1968, Robert Zildjian and Percussion S.A. bought K. Zildjian Co. and all the European trademarks back on behalf of the Avedis Zildjian Co. By 1973, Robert Zildjian had negotiated an agreement with Baldwin (who then owned Gretsch), guaranteeing them exclusive distribution rights in the U.S. for 10 years in exchange for all trademarks.

What happened to K. Zildjian next can only be understood in the context of another development, the formation of *Azco Ltd.* in Meductic, New Brunswick, in 1968. "We were having labor problems at the factory in North Quincy because of the different requirements for oven room workers and machine operators, so my father thought we might try breaking them up into two separate plants, one that would just do casting and rolling, and one that would do finishing work. I'd been coming to Willard Way's hunting and fishing lodge in Meductic for years. I was sitting under a tree one day, and I turned to him and said, 'Willard, how'd you like to run a cymbal factory?' He said 'Sure, why not,' and six months later we opened.

"From '68-'70, we produced Zilco cymbals. There were two types of Zilcos. Originally there was a Zildjian that didn't make it, a second; then there was a Zilco that was a thinner rolling done without hammering, which cut the cost considerably. And that's when Dick Dane and I invented the pressing process for cymbals, which eventually replaced the old Quincy drop hammer that I developed in 1955. But after 1970, Quincy needed all of our production for Zildjians, so they'd send castings up to Azco and we'd make them into cym-



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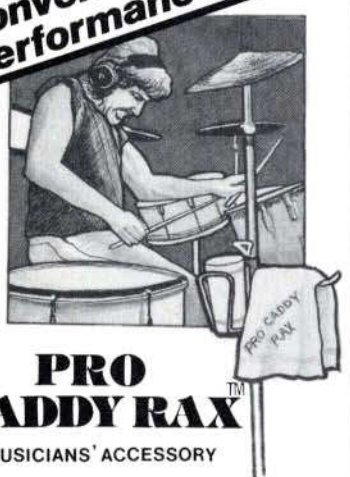

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bals—eventually we were responsible for 40% of the company's output.

"Then in 1975, after we'd been bringing K. Zildjians in for Gretsch, things became impossible with the Turkish government. I had to go to Gretsch and explain that we were taking K. Zildjian out of Turkey, bringing the guys to the Azco factory in Canada, and that we'd be producing the K's up there."

Thus, for a little while anyway, the descendants of Haroutian Zildjian—of the two brothers Avedis and Kerope Zildjian—were reunited in North America after years of transoceanic competition and conflict. But then in February, 1979, Avedis Armand Zildjian passed away after a long and fruitful life and his cousin, Mikhail Zilcan, died a few short months later.

At that point, everything hit the fan, resulting in a drawn-out business divorce that left Armand Zildjian in control of the Avedis Zildjian Co. (and all trademarks thereof), while Robert Zildjian and his extended family, Kerope and Gabriel Zilcan, Robert's wife Willie and their three children Sally, Billy and Andy *(SaBiAn),* continued to make cymbals out of the old Azco factory in Meductic as *Sabian Ltd.*

Rumors have been fast and furious on the street as to details. To make a long, tedious story short and polite, Armand and Robert had differing philosophies and styles of management and cymbal-making. After their father died, the festering differences between Robert and Armand became irreconcilable, and after two and a half years of drawn-out negotiations ("Armand and I were this close to a handshake agreement on the whole settlement," Robert sighs, "but a lawyer kept everybody at each other's throats"), a complicated disengagement was drawn up, which didn't permit Sabian Ltd. to come onto the world market until January, 1982, and prevented them from competing in the U.S. market until January, 1983.

"As far as we're concerned," Robert concludes, "it's much more important to be responsible for what you manufacture and market than it is to be named Stradivarius. We want to make the best cymbals the world's ever seen, and our *AA* and *HH* lines are more than equal to the challenge of any manufacturer. It's kind of hard to take 40 years of your life, put that all aside and start over again, but that's what we're doing, so to hell with all this petty bickering—let's all get on with the real quality manufacturing of cymbals. I know too many good musicians to want to see them disappointed—and ultimately, we're nothing without the musicians. The constant creation and re-creation of music that's been going on for 10,000 years is a lot more important than any of us."

Making of a Sabian *continued from page 23*

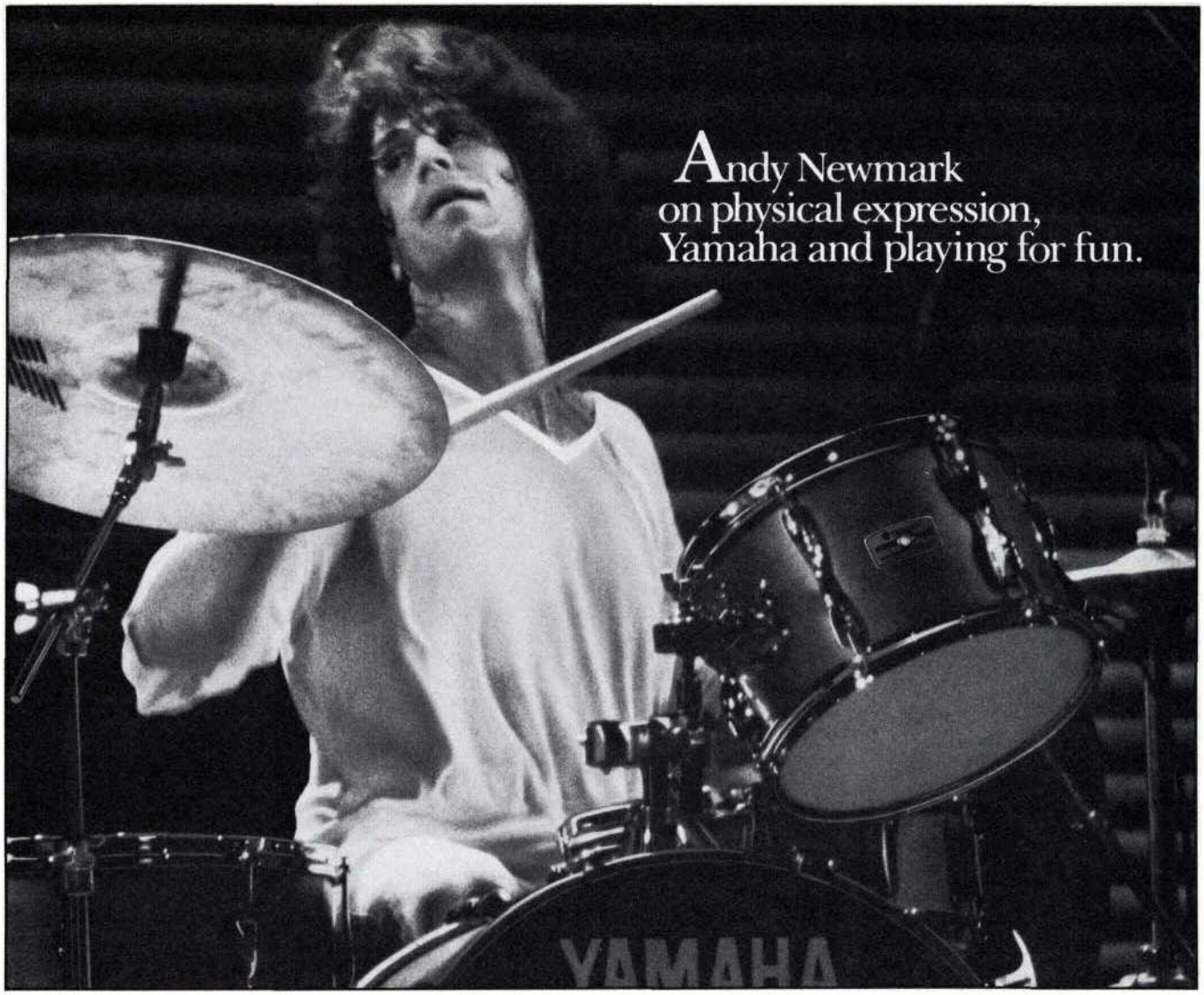
Machine Hammering

"Machine hammering is one of the most important and most overlooked aspects of making cymbals," Billy continues, guiding us towards Sabian's chattering chorus of automatic hammering machines. "What it does is put just that much more tension in the metal by pushing the shape up again, and if the template, anvil and hammers aren't set up right, forget it. Lorenzo, our resident machine-hammering expert, will do a test cymbal from a batch and check it out by having it shaved. If it's not right, he'll take the machine apart and tweak until it's right. The sound you'll get from machine-hammered cymbals will be faster, livelier and brighter, with a longer, more even sustain. Whereas a hand-hammered cymbal will be darker, dirtier and more complex sounding, very rich in overtones, but the attack is shorter than an *AA,* so it's more controllable. We also have a special hand-guided machine hammer that we use to make Splashes and Chinas that shouldn't go on a machine-hammer; we let our guys try it out for simulating cymbals with a K. sound, but they decided that, not only could they do it faster, they could get a lot more character and consistency from each one by hand. So we gave up on that."

Lathing/Edging

We finally step into the area of the factory where the cymbals begin to look like cymbals, as the rusty, multi-colored outer layer of metal is shaved off. You can hear the pitch of the cymbal move up and down as it travels along its individual template and takes on its final shape. "There's so much heat generated in the bit of the cutting tool pressing against the metal, that it's a vital part of the tempering. If they don't press the right hardness in the right way, or if they make too many passes, the temper goes right out of the cymbal and it sounds like a piece of wet leather.

"The maximum number of times to shave a cymbal is two and a half. One pass in the back; one rough half turn in the front, then one final turn in the finishing and it's done. Plus you have different patterns of shaving for different cymbals. And if they make any mistake in that series of movements—too much pressure, too little pressure, wrong direction or too fast in one direction—it's another throw-out. Because the final passes in front are so critical, they do those not with a floor-standing cutting tool, but a hand-held one. As for the shavings, that's the only metal we don't re-melt because you can't load an induction furnace with it—it would sort of vaporize, so that's A-l quality scrap metal.



"In general, my whole approach is very physical. It becomes like a body language when I play. The sound that comes out seems to be an extension of my personality. I dance on the drums. What I do basically is to try to project an attitude for the length of a song. My 'sound' could be called warm and thick, and my playing is deliberate.

"If I tapped the drums lightly and was very civilized about the situation, it wouldn't have the same sound. And my Yamahas can handle it. They don't choke when you play harder. They take on a quality that hits you physically. These drums have the kind of bottom that cuts through *everything*.

"Even though I use a small kit, there are a lot of textures coming out, and it's from the dynamics. Or from hitting the drums in different places. With less drums, I get to know each one better."

"Up until Yamaha, all of the drum kits I'd used were like 'six of one or half a dozen of the other.' Frankly, it didn't matter which one I played. The minute I sat down and hit the Yamahas, they sounded like an EQ'd drum set after it's been mixed for an album. I actually wondered if they'd somehow managed to 'synthesize' my drum sound. Before I owned these drums, I never cared if I took my own kit to a recording session. I have an ally in the studio now."

"I can conduct music like a business, but I never had any delusions that it was just about *that*. I started playing drums because it was fun and that's still why I do it. Forgetting about the phone calls, the diplomacy, the politics — when I'm actually playing the drums, I still get that same childish joy. It's fun."

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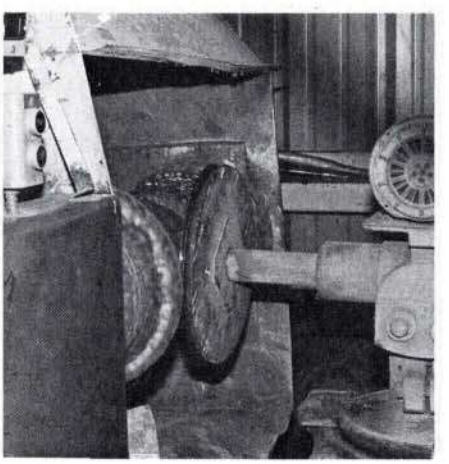
Burnishing (Brilliant Finish)

Many of the older drummers among you who are familiar with the *AA-type* cymbals of 30 or 40 years ago will recall that this venerable vintage bronze had a much smoother, more highly polished finish than the rough-grooved cymbals of the past 20 years. Well, the old-style cutting machines in use before the Beatles had much softer cutters, so they shaved and burnished the cymbal at the same time. The *Brilliant* process, developed at the Azco factory in the '70s, not only adds a glittering finish to *AA* and hh cymbals, it contributes a very significant amount of tempering and hardening to the metal, which from what I heard—in comparative listening to good cymbals before and after burnishing—really fine tunes the sound.



"It mellows the cymbal," Billy explains. "It adds a bit more temper to the metal, takes a couple of ounces of weight off in buffing down the grooves (on a 20" ride), and adds a mellow, fragile, glassy cast to the stick attack and overtones because of the way vibrations are transmitted over a smooth surface, and because more of the tip of your stick is hitting the cymbal, instead of breaking itself up on the grooves. The first step is to use special concave and convex brushes treated with buffers' rouge; in the next step we put them on a high-speed buffer and polish. It's offered as an option on all of our cymbals, but it's a particularly pleasing sound for hi-hats, because the points of contact are so smooth, you get a really sweet, pronounced 'chip' sound that's just beautiful."

SELECTION

With several hundred cymbals coming in every day for sorting and initial inspection, there isn't much time to linger on the fine points (not until the second inspection when they pick orders for distributors and dealers). But then, you don't need that much time to do a quick take on a cymbal, if you know what you're looking for and how to listen.

"The main thing I look for is that the cymbals should have a clear, even, transparent sound with some character," Gabe Zilcan explains. "If the sound is good enough to pass, I let it through. Next thing I look for are physical/visual imperfections. I separate rejects into two different groups: there are cymbals with visual defects that have a good sound; then there are cymbals that are visually alright but have a bad shape or are warped. Usually, we just cut those up and make new castings."

Gabe directs our attention to a flat metal table and a pile of rejects. "We lay cymbals out on this plate to see that they aren't warped." The cymbal he is using as an example wobbles perceptibly, but upon playing it, the sound is pleasing. The next cymbal up has a weird, out-of-phase crash sound, and Gabe checks its shape on a template. "If the shape is not even all the way around the cymbal, it will affect the sound. This one is too high on one side and too low on the other; that's why it sounded funny compared to the other cymbals." The next cymbal sounds fairly bland and colorless, but as Gabe checks it on the table and template, he finds the shape is good.

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"Sometimes a cymbal like this I will think about," he confesses. "I'll let it sit on the shelves for three or four months, then I'll re-check it again, because in the course of the aging process, the metal might settle. So a cymbal may not have a good sound to me, but if it has a good shape, it may have a chance to age in. After I've divide up an entire oven, I'll go back over the questionable ones.

"Then, after I'm sure about the sound and look, I divide them up by weight to categorize them soundwise, because slight differences in the weight will make all the difference in the sound. For instance, these are all 18" *AA* cymbals in this oven. These are around 3 Ibs., so they're Thin Crashes; these are between 3-3 1/4 Ibs., so they're Medium-Thin Crashes; these are 3 1/4-3 1/2 Ibs., so they're Crash-Rides; and these have a beefier sound, between 3 1/2-3/4 Ibs., so they're Medium Crashes; and this one is 4 lbs., so it's a Rock Crash. So you see, a difference of only 1/4 Ib. will change the sound classification of each 18" cymbal, and that varies more or less for larger and smaller cymbals. Actually, without weighing them, you can tell all that by ear, but weighing helps, just to be sure."

The key to all of these tests is the type of sticks Gabe uses. I pull out a pair of Joe Cocuzzo sticks by Capella, a fairly thin, wood-tip stick with a round bead, and Gabe begins to giggle. "That's a beautiful stick," he says, looking them over, "nice light ride sound on 18's, but it's the worst possible stick I could use to test cymbals—it makes them sound too good. It's a salesman's stick," he laughs.

"That's for sure," Billy Zildjian adds. "At trade shows we'll pull out Regal Tip 5*A's,* because they have a thick body and a very thin throat, so they'll make any garbage can cover sound terrific. But for our testing purposes we mainly use Vic Firth and Pro Mark 5*A*'s and 5*B's* because they have a much thicker throat, which brings out a lot more of the overtones, particularly the unwanted overtones, so it's much easier to throw out a cymbal that doesn't make it. And of course we use nylon tips to avoid covering the cymbals with wood stick marks before they reach the dealer. Nylon tips bring out a lot of overtones, and if you know what a wood tip sounds like, you'll be able to predict the difference.

"Then for our final sorting," Billy concludes, "when the guys are going through the shelves picking orders, they get to take a second opinion of cymbals, and we're always amazed how many clinkers will slip by Gabe, even when he's being as strict as he can. This final sorting gives you perspective, because when you're hitting 1,000 cymbals or so of the same cymbal in a day, you're going to get ear fatigue—we try and catch the bad ones on this final pass."

Kerope Zilcan personally inspects all of the *HH* cymbals, with suggestions for Gabe to pass on to his hammerers; when he's satisfied with the selection *of HH's,* he signs each one on the underside of the cup—it's the name Sabian in Armenian.

Having come this far in the cymbal-making process, it seems only appropriate to take an abbreviated look at the range and characteristics of the Sabian *AA* and *HH* line. Machine-hammered and hand-hammered cymbals represent different points of view in sound, and what works for you is a matter of personal taste and the peculiar demands of your gig. We discovered some interesting sounds in the Sabian vault, and some significant differences in the response of *AA's* and *HH's.*

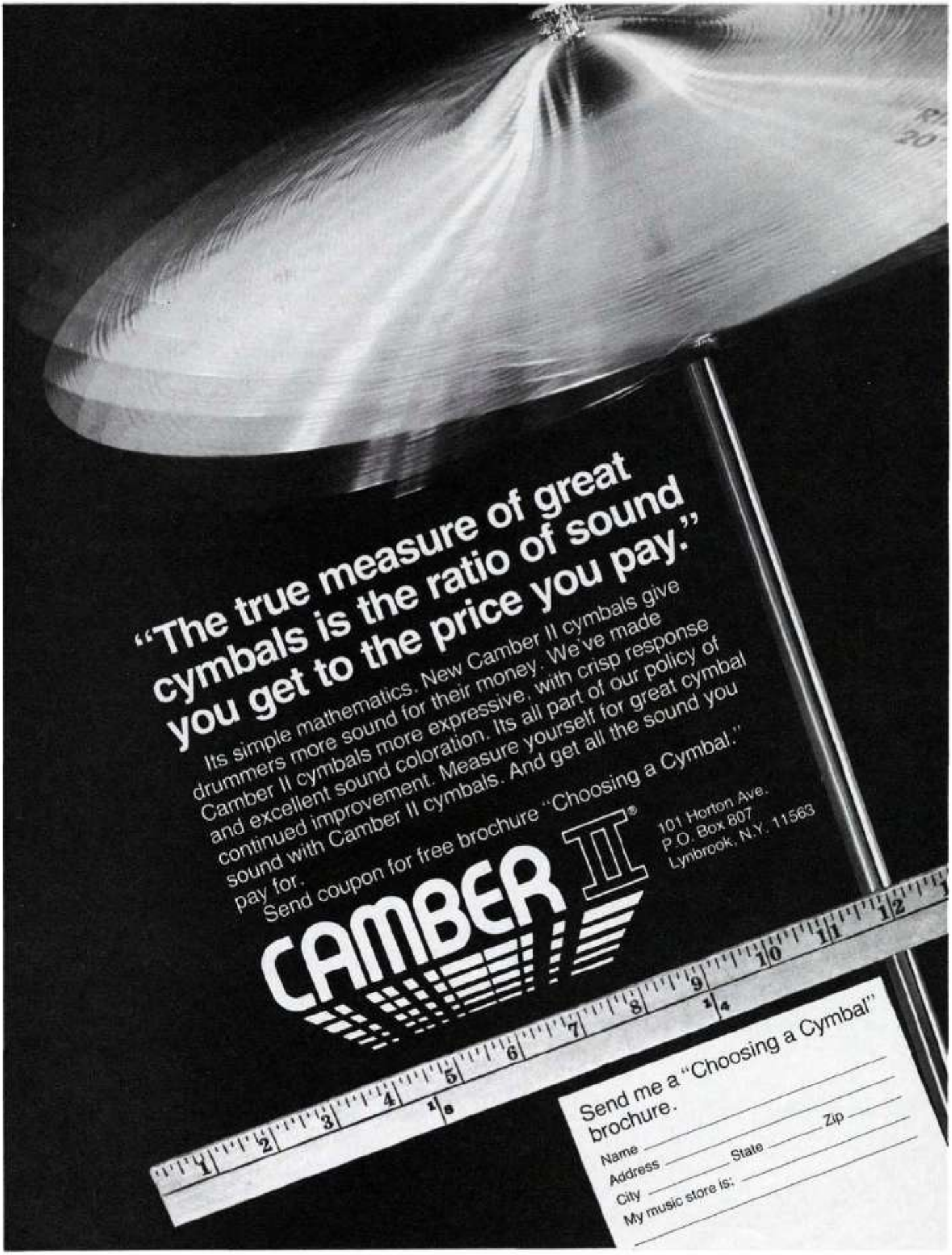
SABIAN AA Cymbals: AA cymbals are functional in the best sense of that word. Compared to the *HH* cymbal, machine-hammered *AA's* generally have a higher profile and a harder, more metallic feel; their pitch is brighter, with a sharper, more immediate attack, longer sustain, and lively, explosive overtones. At their best, the character of *AA's* tends to be fairly even; the cymbals *ring* because the undertone and overtones blend smoothly for a tight, controlled sound. These are the types of cymbals that make engineers smile and singers breathe easy, because they're designed not to get in the way, which doesn't mean that *AA's* are namby-pamby—they're louder (perhaps we should say more present) than *HH's.* More powerful, but less personable might be a good rule of thumb.

Played with a light stick, they are good club date/studio cymbals. Using heavier sticks offers "more and better clang" as a *Wall Street Journal* flack so deftly put it—these are the cymbals of choice for people who, by and large, would prefer to hear the drums.

SABIAN HH (Hand-Hammered) Cymbals: HH's are for those players who *like* to hear their cymbals. *HH's* are for drummers who don't play like sidemen—they're not looking for function so much as *character.* With their lower profile, dark, shouting tone, and blistered, pock-marked surface, *HH's* look like the dark side of the moon. Ominous and oriental in aspect, the *HH* is richer and warmer than any machine-hammered cymbal; the hand-hammering process naturally yields more individuality because cymbals aren't worked down to so precise a tolerance.

Where *AA* cymbals go *ting, HH's* go *tan*—more of a vowel sound than a consonant. They are softer in feel than *AA's,* having a dark, splashy character, with complex overtones, but the attack dynamic is much clearer. The undertone is short, low and solid, which accounts for the *HH's* quick attack, and quick decay. Because the sound of the undertone is more distinct from the overtones than it would be in an *AA, HH's* are breathier.

Enough already. May your ears be the judge. I *personally* would use *AA's* if I wanted a more legato sound, and *HH's* if I wanted to play more rhythmically and bang away, because they wouldn't build up.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by Randy Martin

Improving Your Sight - Reading Skills

Good sight readers have the ability to play almost any piece of music put in front of them, and play it accurately, even the first time through. It's a valuable skill, and one which anyone with a good basic understanding of reading can develop or improve.

There are three important factors which are essential for proficient sight-reading skill: (1) Knowing how to "skim the part"; (2) Recognition through repetition; (3) Reading ahead. Let's look at each one individually.

Skimming The Part

Though sight reading means playing the part without ever having previously seen it, actually, between the time you're first handed a new part and the first playing, there is usually sufficient time to look things over and key in on the most important elements. This is known as "skimming the part." It's your opportunity to look for things like tempo markings, repeat signs, changes in time signature, changes in feel (i.e., Latin to swing), changes in equipment (i.e., sticks to brushes), special effects or simulations (i.e., cowbell or bell of cymbal, woodblock or rims, etc.), important dynamic markings, and key rhythmic figures, particularly those which may be difficult to play or appear written in an unorthodox manner.

Depending on the length of the part, a skilled reader will skim the part and be adequately prepared for the first playing in less than a minute. The key point to be made here is that you *never want to be caught by surprise* during the actual performance. If you've done a good job of skimming, you'll know what's coming before it comes, and that's half the battle right there.

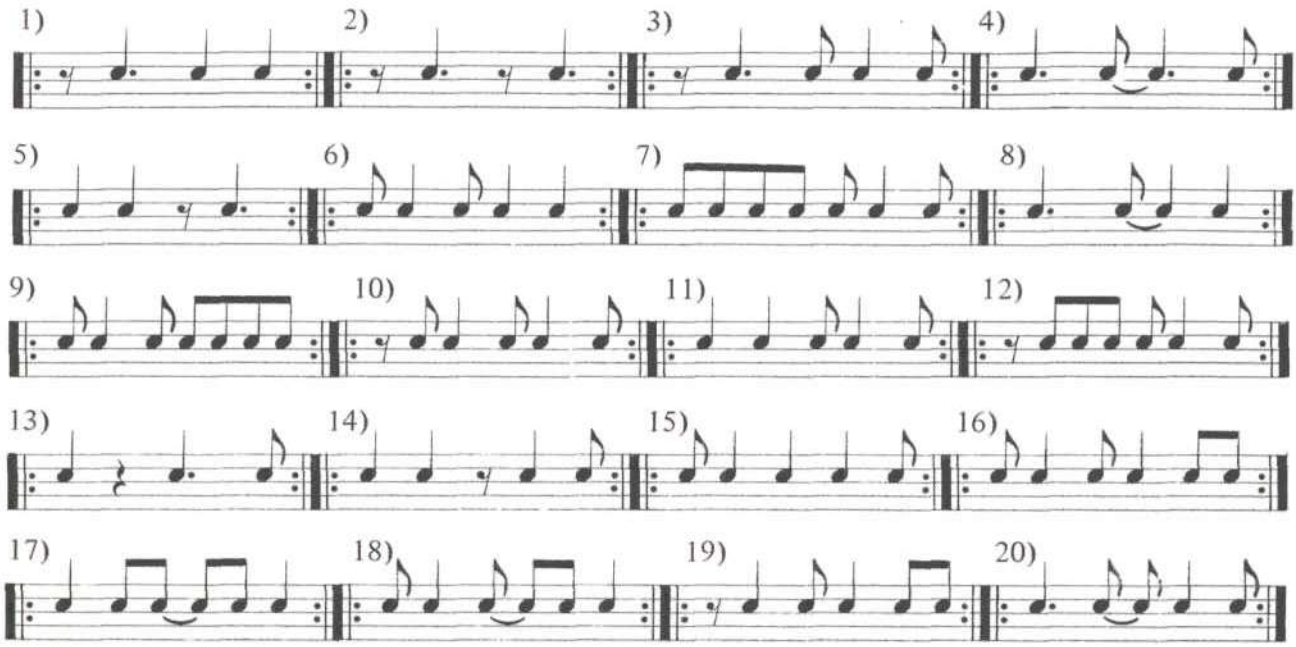
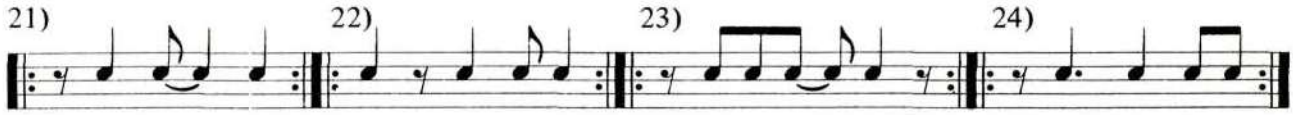
Recognition Through Repetition

Assuming you've carefully skimmed your part and are fully aware of the requirements, the next important factor is the accurate execution of the rhythmic figures on the part. The key word here is *recognition.* Accurate recognition occurs only after a figure or group of figures have been seen and played countless times. The mind tends to absorb and retain information which has been repeated time after time.

Many professional drum teachers claim that they developed excellent sight-reading ability themselves, and attribute it to the time spent reading the same basic material over and over along with their students, usually at very slow tempos.

Below, you'll find an assortment of 24 rhythmic figures which commonly appear on drum parts in jazz arrangements. Keep in mind that what you're after is instant visual recognition followed, of course, by accurate execution. Begin by studying each figure without playing it. Absorb it into your mind's eye. Then sing it aloud or to yourself, as you continue to look at it. You can also try closing your eyes and singing the figure, while you mentally visualize what it looks like. Then begin to play each figure 50 or more times on the drumset or practice pad. Play slowly and deliberately, gradually increasing speed as you absorb each new rhythm. More advanced players may want to repeat each figure with the left hand while maintaining the standard time pattern on cymbal, bass drum, and hi-hat.

Obviously, these 24 patterns are not the last word. Any basic reading text that offers a selection of syncopated rhythms can be used to continue your study. As you practice each figure, remember that you are trying to establish instant recognition of the most common rhythmic figures and to develop the ability to *see the sounds rather than the notes.* By that I mean *hearing thefigure* as you look at it, as opposed to seeing a group of unrelated 8th notes, quarter notes, dots, and rests. You accomplish this by way of constant repetition. The sooner you become adept at applying this concept, the sooner you'll be on your way to improved sight reading.

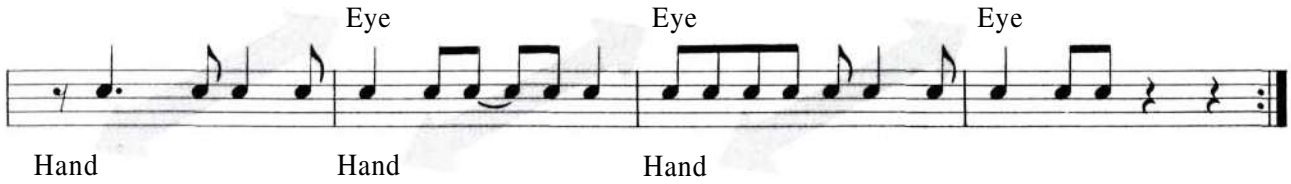


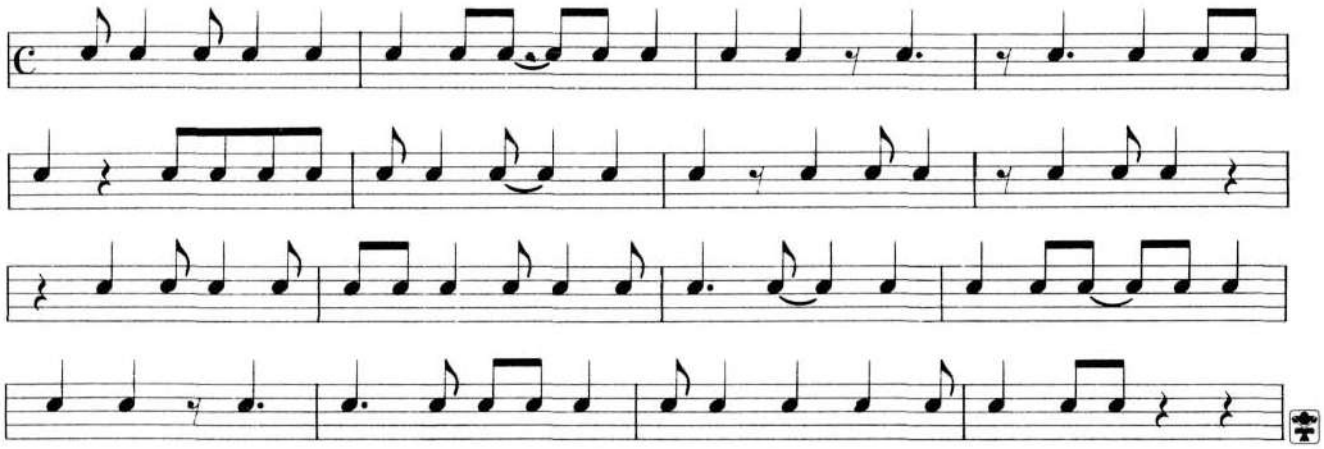
Reading Ahead

The final step in improving your sight reading is cultivating your ability to *read ahead* of what you are actually playing. If the eye is given the opportunity to see a rhythmic figure a split second before playing it, nine times out often, the correct message will be relayed to the hands. Once you develop the ability to do this, you will limit the chances of being caught by surprise, which is the main reason why otherwise competent readers slip up.

Consider, for a moment, the symphony orchestra. If you follow the conductor's baton closely, you'll undoubtedly note that cues to various members of the orchestra occur a split second before the actual response. In essence, the conductor is reading and conducting ahead of what you're actually hearing. The same basic concept applies here. To avoid being caught by surprise, you *must* learn to read ahead.

How far ahead? Slower tempos allow more time to grasp the figures before playing them, so it's not necessary to read as far ahead. However, as the tempo increases, so does the need to keep the eye further out in front of the hand. Though I have known of musicians capable of reading as far as one and a half to two bars ahead, suffice to say that even one-half to one full bar ahead will improve your sight reading considerably.

The four bars below offer a graphic example of the *eye ahead of hand concept.* Practice it slowly until you develop a knack for doing it. Later, as you get better with the technique, you can increase the tempo and expand your eye movement.

The following 16-bar solo can be used to further practice the technique. Once you've gotten used to the idea, try it with other reading material. Also, be sure to incorporate the technique in all your sight-reading endeavors.

Remember, skim the part, learn to recognize as many rhythmic figures as possible, see sounds rather than notes, and read ahead. These are the keys to improving your sight-reading skills.

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by Rick Van Horn

The Ambition Blues

There are many frustrations associated with club performing, but the greatest one occurs when a well-meaning customer comes up to you on a break and asks, "Why are you playing *here?* You're good enough to be in Las Vegas, or have a record of your own!" It's frustrating because you might be asking yourself the same question night after night. The lure of the "Big Time," and the problem of how and when to make an attempt to reach it, is probably the greatest single psychological thorn in the side of the really talented club player or group.

It's important, however, to take time to think about all of the factors involved in making a try for the big time, and to fully appreciate what you have going for you right there in the club market. Don't lose sight of the need for day-to-day income in favor of the more idealistic goal. You don't earn points for "paying your dues" by starving while waiting for the big break. You "pay your dues" by working, experimenting, and playing for whatever you can get—not by selling shoes or pumping gas. That doesn't contribute materially to your musical development. It only serves to divert you from the activities that can help you improve. When you combine your efforts—when you earn a living *by doing* what you need to do to make the big break—it saves time and keeps you employed in the musical field.

Take a look at all the advantages of working steadily in a club while you pursue your ultimate career goals:

1. *You maintain a solid economic base.* This is the most important factor, and it means more than just paying the bills. If you keep yourself gainfully employed, you can keep your equipment (including wardrobe) in good shape, and have the ready capital to make a quick move if the need arises and the circumstances warrant. Often a club group finally does get an opportunity for a high-potential showcase or audition, but they aren't prepared to do the necessary traveling, or the quality of their equipment isn't sufficient to really *produce* for them. What gets by in some club situations won't cut it for the big-time opportunity. You need to make the money necessary to keep your equipment maintained and updated.

2. *You have a place to develop your act.* The club presents you with a stage, an audience, and the opportunity to work on your material and get an immediate reaction to what you're doing. You can perfect your presentation, experiment with original songs, work on timing and smoothness of performance—in fact, all the elements which keep you in good shape professionally. Keeping your chops up, your ideas fresh, and your performance sharp would call for constant practice anyway. The club gives you the opportunity to do that while still maintaining a steady income. You enjoy a tremendous advantage over the individual player who woodsheds in the garage, then goes to Tinseltown to knock on studio doors while working in the all-night grocery store.

3. *You can arrange for audition-related traveling.* If you are a member of a traveling act, it's often possible to book engagements in cities where industry people can come to see you on the job. You might play in L.A., New York, Vegas or Nashville, or close enough to these locations to arrange for A&R people or promoters to observe what you do in the situation that is most familiar and comfortable for you, rather than at a cold and tense audition in some studio or a high-pressure showcase. You will also save on the expenses you would otherwise incur if you had to pack everything up and go where they are just for the purpose of the audition.

4. *You can earn the money for promotional expenses.* While working in a club, a very good way to present yourself to a prospective record label or promoter is through the use of demo tapes, either audio cassettes or (if you have the money and local facilities) a videotape. This might mean some local studio time or a remote taping made on the job site. Along with the appropriate resume, bios, and other written or photographic promo material, there's a goodly amount of time and money that you will need to invest. Working in the club gives you the ability to have both. You can take your time and prepare a truly professional package, because you're employed during the same period, and the money you make working (assuming you do a little judicious budgeting) will pay for the promo costs.

5. *You can operate on your own timetable.* Whether you have plans for stardom as an individual or as a member of a group, the length of time it can take will vary, depending on dozens of different factors that are involved. When you are working steadily *at your craft* all the while, you don't really *lose* any time—there are no deadlines other than those you might set for yourself, and they can be flexible to suit the circumstances. Nobody else is putting any pressure on you to produce by any certain time. Even the biggest name acts in the country are under contracts stipulating the production of a certain number of records in a certain period of time, and we've all heard the albums that didn't measure up to previous efforts simply because the artist was pressured to put the album out before he or she really had the material to present. You are under no such pressure as long as you are working in a club. This will give you the enviable opportunity to keep working on your act until you get it exactly the way you want it. You will also have the time to shop it around until you get the break you're looking for, and you won't have to worry about the rent in the meantime.

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advise you to give up your dreams or ambitions. I still have mine, after almost 20 years of playing in clubs. However, my strongest advice is not to lose sight of reality. Have a game plan for your attempt at stardom, and go about it in a businesslike way. Keeping sight of reality includes appreciating the unlikelihood of someone coming into the club and "discovering" you. Many groups take unprofitable jobs for the sake of "exposure," or because some agent or club manager has sold them on the number of "important contacts" they might make. This is usually a one-sided deal in favor of the booker. Most discoveries and contacts are made as the result of carefully planned efforts on the part of the discoverees, namely the band. Very rarely is a group actually approached by someone from the industry if the group has not solicited that person's attention in the first place. However, when properly planned and executed, the progression from club work to recording and concert act is a time-tested method. The list of major recording acts that began as club bands is endless: Heart, Styx, and REO Speedwagon are well-known American groups that came up that way. Groups from England are legendary for developing in the forge of smoky, seedy little rock clubs: The Beatles, the Who, and the Stones, to name a few old-timers; the Clash and the English Beat more recently. Artists in pop, c&w, Latin, and any musical field you care to name could be included on my list as well.

I'd like to mention that very rarely is an act *created* from individual musicians, no matter how talented, and then immediately placed on vinyl for potential stardom. Once in a great while, a producer has an idea for a type of act and actually seeks out the artist to fill it—the most successful example in recent years might be the Village People, who were put together from an ad in a New York newspaper, placed on record less than six months after meeting each other, and were riding the top of the charts with hit after disco hit another six months later. This was definitely the exception, rather than the rule. My point is that the club scene is actually the foundation upon which the recording and concert industry is built—it's the "farm club" level for the "major league" acts, and certainly serves as the proving ground for individual artists and musicians. For you, this means it's the way to work toward your future, making an investment that can pay off in big bucks later, while still earning a decent living now, *doing what you like to do* and improving your skills all the time—an opportunity that very few other professions enjoy.

So the next time someone asks you why you aren't working on your first album, put a smile on your face, think about all the things you've got going for you right there in that club, and proudly answer, "That's just what I'm doing!"

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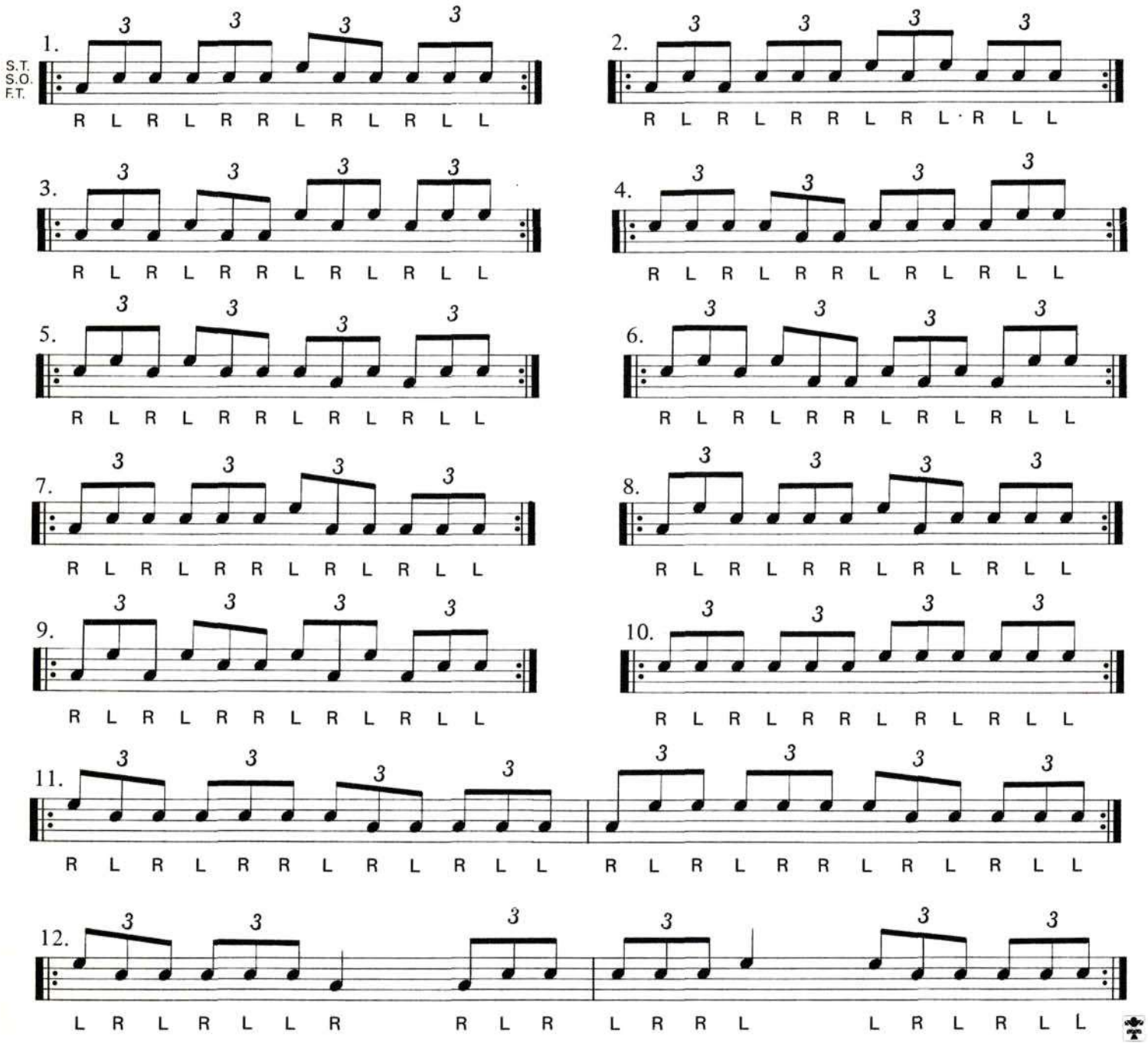
by Stanley Ellis

Double Paradiddles Around the Drumset

The double paradiddle is useful in drumset work. But, it's been avoided by many drummers in lieu of the single-stroke roll. In the 12 exercises below, I've maintained an 8th-note triplet feeling throughout. All exercises, except # 12, are to be repeated during practice. Because of the sticking, # 12 should *not* be repeated, but it should be alternated with two measures of swing time. All of the 12 exercises should be practiced with the hi-hat played on beats "2" and "4" with your left foot.

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12.
L R L R L L R
R L R
L R R L
L R L R L L

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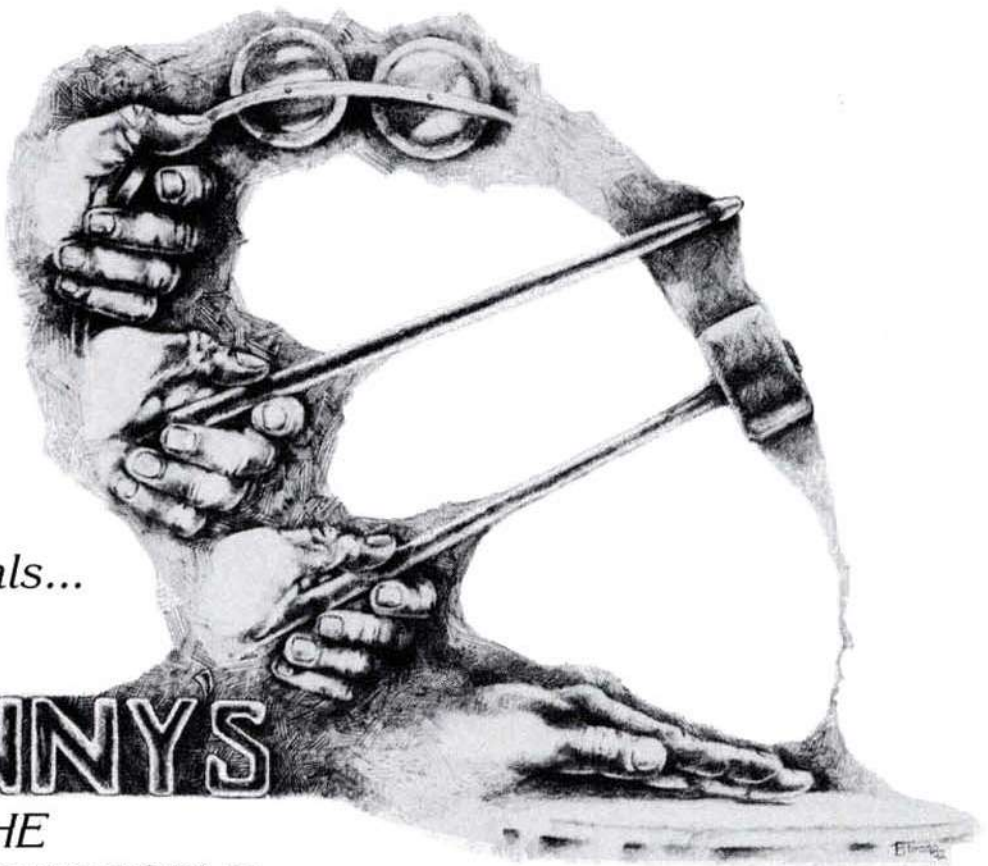

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LaBarbera continued from page 27

Miles and Shelly Manne. The nuns were sure they had failed.

KA: In a 1974 article, you mentioned Miles Davis as one of the greatest musicians in the 20th century. What are your thoughts today?

JL: I just bought that new album, *Star People,* and I love it. The last one didn't do too much for me, but that's just a personal opinion. I'm so happy that he's back playing, because more than ever the music needs a force of his caliber out there playing, and I'm also really happy that he's got John Scofield in his band. To me, Scofield is one of the bright new stars of jazz and of the future. Miles sounds as strong as ever, which is amazing in itself, because you just don't put the trumpet down for six or seven years and pick it up again and come back sounding like that, but he's done it, which to me, is incredible. I've always been a Miles Davis fan. I've been listening to his music and going to see him perform for years, and I love him. What made it easy for me to follow the transitions in his style is that I followed him right along, just like I followed Sonny Rollins and Coltrane. They started out doing standard tunes using the basic song form. They played that, and played that to perfection as far as I'm concerned, so the only possible step really, outside of just continuing to compose more material in that style, was to go with something different, you know, like the fusion thing.

KA: So when he came out with *Bitches Brew* you saw that as a progression?

JL: I loved it. He just floored me. I mean, his use of electronics and the style that they were playing were fantastic. Even on his current album, if you could just take Miles away from the rest of his band, and just listen exactly to Miles, he really doesn't sound all that much different than Miles playing on *Porgy and Bess* or *Milestones.* I mean, he sounds like Miles, and the same is true of Coltrane. I know he lost a lot of people when he got into *Interstellar Space* and a lot of those albums that sounded far out, but to me, 'Trane always sounded the same. He sounded like 'Trane. It was the other people who made it sound so radically different from what he's done before.

KA: It's been noted by fellow musicians that you're a lyrical drummer, much more so than the new school of drummers. Do you agree?

JL: Yeah, I think so. That's because, being 35, I had a chance to hear some of the really great drummers, and lyrical drumming was the style that was happening when I was a kid. You know, Elvin, Max Roach, Philly, Shelly Manne—these were the drummers I listened to, so there was no way I could develop anything but a lyrical style.

KA: What do you think of the new school of drummers?

JL: I like it fine; it's just that I find a lot more that interests me in the other style. Actually, the sound is what is really important. All of those drummers that I mentioned had their own sound, and do have their own sound. Today there are a lot of drummers who are playing really well, but they all seem to go after the same sound out of their drums, and to me, that limits their development. I think that you really have to work on your own sound as well as your ideas. If you play a record by Max or Philly or Art Blakey, you know immediately who it is just from their sound; whereas with a lot of drummers today, those that are recording anyway, you'd really be hard pressed to identify them. But I guess the new drummers are a product of their generation in the same way that Max, Elvin, and Philly Joe are products of theirs.

KA: And Joe LaBarbera is a product of his.

JL: Absolutely. I guess it's a continuing process. I learned from Elvin, Buddy Rich, and Max—they were the storytellers. I heard the story, it registered in my brain, and it conies out of me sounding a little different. If somebody comes and hears me play, and gets a little bit of me and a little bit of Elvin, Buddy and Max in the bargain, then that's great. But you still have to work on developing your style.

KA: Have you done any teaching?

JL: Yeah, when I was living in New York I had a number of students, but when our daughter was born, we wanted to get out of

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Manhattan, so we moved up to the Woodstock area. After that I just couldn't keep contact with the students. Unless I can do it on a regular basis, I really don't want to do it.

KA: Did you enjoy the teaching?

JL: I did, and I had some good students who are out there now, and that feels good. It's tough out there, but I think I'd give any drummer planning to make a career of music the same advice I got when I was in high school. There were a lot of people then who were willing to tell me, "Forget it. You can't make a living playing jazz." If I've heard that once, I've heard it a million times. But I had a friend at the time who was the bass player with Maynard Ferguson's band in the early '60s, and he gave me the best advice I ever got. He said, "If you want to play badly enough, you'll play," and that's the truth. I mean, that puts it right in your lap. If you really have the desire, then you'll do it.

KA: You've never been at a point where you've thought about giving it up?

JL: Never.

KA: Never gotten that rough?

JL: Oh, it's been rough. I can remember coming home one night from a job in New York where I got paid 11 dollars. I said to Carol, "This is crazy. I just did a job in New York for *11 bucks!"* But you have to persevere. You know, the next day Bill Evans might call, or who-knows-what may happen.

KA: What's your motivating force?

JL: The fact that I really love playing the drums. I love music.

KA: What kind of equipment do you use?

JL: I have two sets of drums. They're both Gretsch, and in fact, they're old Gretsch drums. I have a small set for jazz playing that consists of a 5 x 14 snare, two 8 x 12 tom-toms that are mounted on the bass drum,a 14 x 14 floor tom, and an 18 x 14 bass drum. They all have calfskin heads on them. I use K. Zildjian cymbals from Turkey with that set. The set that I use with Tony is a set of Gretsch also, a 6 1/2 x 14 snare drum, 8 x 12, 9 x 13 and 16 x 16 tom-toms, and a 14 x 20 bass drum. These all have *Fiberskyn* heads, and I use the Avedis Zildjian cymbals made in the USA.

KA: And the sticks?

JL: I use a stick that's made here in Canada, called the Kirkwood *C* model drumstick. The sound difference between the two sets is enormous. Working in a totally acoustical situation as I did with Bill, the calfskin heads were everything.

KA: Your setup is somewhat unique. How did you arrive at it?

JL: It's all just for convenience and ease of playing. As for sitting so low, I've sat at a few drumsets where I was sitting high, and I always had the feeling that I was reaching down into the drums. That always caused me to arch my back, which I find uncomfortable. By sitting low I can always keep a straight back, and I feel like I'm playing up into the drums.

When I was with Chuck, I had some pretty weird angles. I think I had everything almost straight up and down. That's been changed; I've flattened things out more. It all depends on what I'm playing and who I'm playing with. Over the last five or six years I haven't really changed anything. Now I have kind of a flowing motion between the snare drum and tom-toms.

KA: I'm surprised you were never criticized for setting up your drums like that.

JL: No musician, really, would say anything about another person's concept of how to set up a drumset. Alan Dawson would be the first person to tell you to have things the way they are comfortable for you. I feel today that having cymbals straight up and down like I did back then—almost vertical—is uncomfortable. But back then I didn't, so if someone had told me not to do that, I wouldn't have listened.

KA: I noticed some difficulty with the sound equipment today. Is that very difficult in terms of performing?

JL: I'll tell you the truth, when I was with Chuck Mangione, the sound system ruled my life. But I just decided somewhere along the line that I wasn't going to allow that to happen, so I'm at the point now where I don't care if I have a microphone, or if I have a monitor. I can go out there, do the job, and by radar or whatever, I'll get through it.

KA: You've come not to depend on it—to work in spite of it?

JL: Absolutely. You have to keep your sanity.

KA: You've said that you prefer the intimacy of small groups to working in front of large crowds. How do reconcile that with what you're doing now? Do the crowds bother you?

JL: Not at all. I did say that, and I prefer a smaller crowd for Bill Evans' type of playing, and any type of creative thing, but I don't think that even a large crowd would be a problem, because they'd react in a different way. Now with something like Tony's thing, where there's a rhythm-type number where people can clap their hands, that's what they're supposed to do. Whereas someone like Bill wouldn't play the same type of tune, and the reactions wouldn't be the same. But I've come to enjoy the crowds. When we did *The Land of Make Believe* album here at Massey Hall with Chuck, the crowd was fantastic. The place was so hot that the people wouldn't leave. They had to open the doors in the middle of winter and let the cold in before the people would leave. They were going to stay forever. We did nine encores. So there have been good experiences like that with audiences. I think a good rule of thumb, as far as audiences go, is don't go out on Saturday night if you want to hear the music. You get the dumbest crowds on Saturday night. I don't care if it's the Vanguard or wherever, you get the dumbest crowds. And it's difficult, especially with something like Bill's music where attention is

necessary. But when it's right, and you've got that empathy with the crowd, and they're feeling it just as much as you are, that's more addictive than any drug I've ever heard of, because that's why we're out there.

KA: Do you like the challenge an audience presents?

JL: Absolutely. You know, when I was a kid, I used to read articles about musicians who said that the whole thing is to relate to the audience, and you have to be able to communicate with people. Well, I couldn't really understand that, because I was just trying to learn how to play licks and ideas—play the drums. But when you get older, and when you actually work in front of people night after night, you understand that the audience is everything. You've got to get it across to them, otherwise it's no good. Working with Tony, I think the key to the whole thing is that this is a show, and there are certain things that the artist needs to rely on night after night so that he can do his bit. Whereas in a totally improvised situation, it can be different every time. But say, for example, if I were to decide to play "I Left My Heart In San Francisco" all out "crash bang" tonight, then that would be wrong. You have to be able to adjust yourself to the mood of the job you're doing.

KA: Doesn't that get monotonous, doing the same thing night after night?

JL: Of course it does. You have to look for little ways that you can dress it up for yourself to keep it interesting. But there's just a little range there that you can work with so you don't throw the artist or the band off.

KA: You have experience in trios, quartets, big bands and orchestras. Does your concept change for each situation?

JL: Not that much. In any of those situations there's a certain art of accompaniment that you have to have. With a big band or orchestra I may have to be a little more obvious with the time. As for how I'd approach those different situations, it's pretty much the same thing: playing time and setting up certain figures. Accompanying.

KA: Can you elaborate on the art of accompanying a singer?

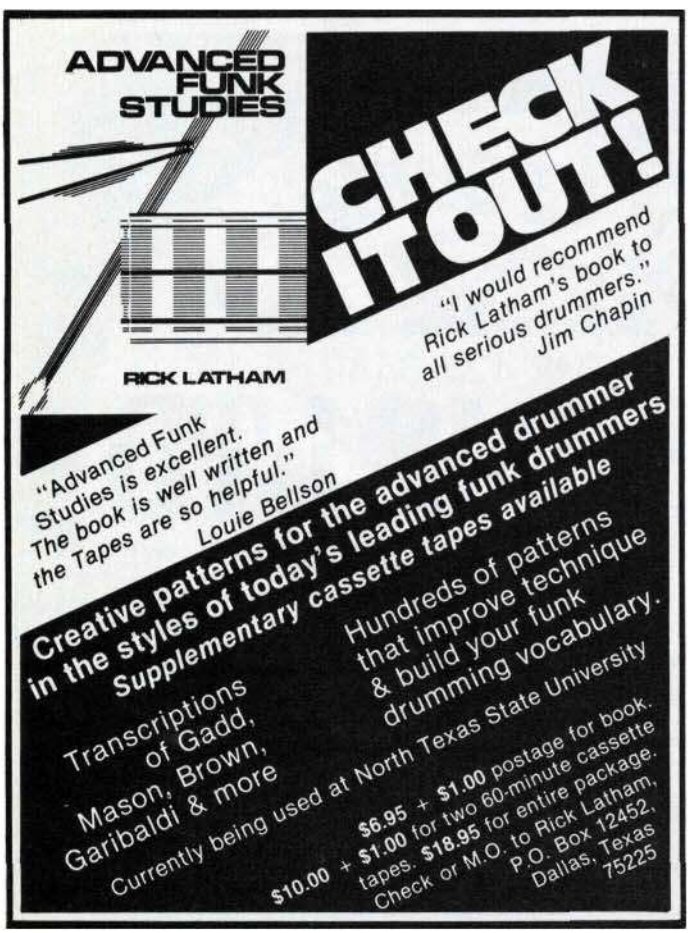
JL: You approach it with the realization that the singer is the reason people come to hear you; the singer is the star. That'll help to clarify your role. You have to really be sparse for certain singers. Tony can sing all over the beat, and he can "back phrase," which means that he can stretch a phrase out that might be written in the next eight bars, but he might be singing it in the last eight bars. You really have to keep the phrases open; you won't necessarily want to play a fill at the end of every eight bars. Play as little as possible until you figure out the singer's style, then go from there. Generally, my approach is to underplay it until I feel comfortable enough to add certain things. If singers can explain themselves in musical terms, that makes things very easy, but if not, you find yourself trying to translate things that non-musicians are trying to explain to musicians. That takes a lot of patience, because they may have a valid point, even if they're not saying it in the best musical terms.

KA: Tony Bennett has a certain image. Tonight, I understand, he's being given an award by a black publication here for his Civil Rights involvement, and his commitment to the Civil Rights program throughout the world. I believe he's also one of the artists who has refused to go to South Africa.

JL: Right. I think he was also the first white artist—I may be wrong, but I think I'm right—who performed at the Civil Rights march in 1960. In fact, we did one last year for Coretta King in Atlanta, that was a ball with Stevie Wonder.

KA: Does that kind of political statement conflict with musicians, do you think?

JL: Not at all. I think jazz particularly is a political type of music. I mean, it's expressing a certain point of view that isn't necessarily the tradition. Getting back to Bill Evans, we were supposed to go to Russia. A big tour was planned, and it would have meant a lot of money for Bill. But about a week before we were supposed to go, Russia invaded Afghanistan. Bill not only canceled the job, but wrote a letter to *downbeat,* which was the only place that he could express himself as a musician, explaining why he wasn't going to go and make this Russian tour. I just found out about six months ago that people in Russia got hold of the magazine, and when they read this, Bill became some kind of a national hero over there, because he really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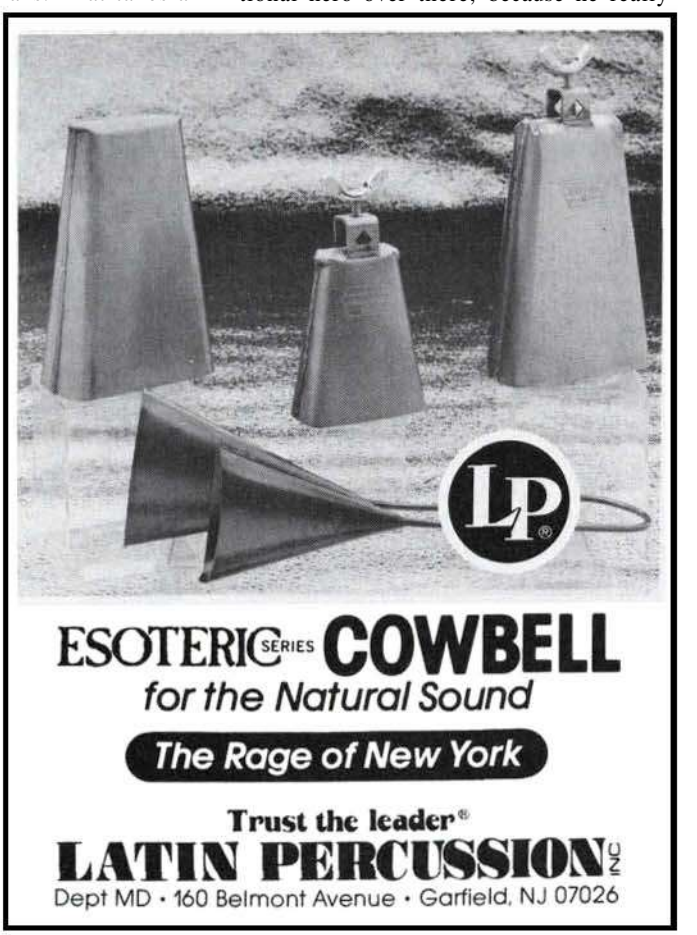
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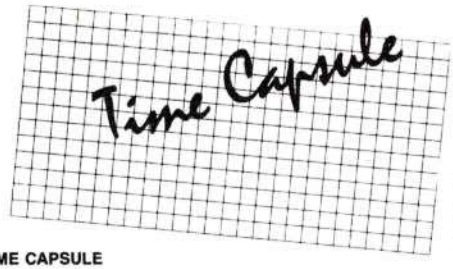

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believed in what he was doing.

KA: In an article on you written a few years ago, you stated that you didn't want to lead your own group for a long time because you didn't feel you had the strength musically. Do you feel you've found that strength?

JL: Well, no, I don't think I have found the strength because I haven't written anything. You know, to be the leader of a band, you've got to direct the music. Now I've learned that from the best. You've really got to be able to control the music totally. Give room to the other players in the band to express themselves, but if the band isn't a direct expression of *your* musical ideas, then I really fail to see where you have any right being the leader. I'm a sideman, and to me, that's not a negative term. To me it's very healthy to come to grips with that immediately, because your job is to provide accompaniment. You know, the minute you start trying to step out and do anything other than accompany, then you're wrong. Your purpose is to give the best accompaniment you can to whoever is up front. If they turn around and say, "You go," then fine, you go; but that's your job. Being sideman, to me, is a good thing. I like attention as well as anybody else, but when you're talking about real headliners—people who can go out and command the attention of a huge audience—that takes a certain kind of personality. Maybe I don't have that. I haven't really tested it, to be truthful with you, but I've seen Tony go out there and sing one song and people just go to pieces. And the same with Chuck and Bill. But there are a lot of sacrifices that also have to be made on a personal level, that to me, just aren't worth it. I feel good about where I am.

KA: Can I ask a fantasy question? Who would you love to be playing with?

JL: I ask myself that all the time. You know, there's probably a list of people a mile long that I'd love to play with, but to pick some right off the top, I'd like to work with Freddie Hubbard, and McCoy, and Joe Henderson. These people, I love their style. There are quite a few people out there. I'd like to play more with John Scofield, who's one of my favorites, and also Alphonso Johnson, a bass player who I worked with years ago with Chuck Mangione. He's always been one of my favorite bass players, and he's in L.A., so maybe I'll look him up. Like I said before, I really have to get back into playing more jazz. I really feel personally that I need to get back into a playing that is expressing *me.* The few times that I have gone out and played jazz in the last couple of years, it was there, you know, like I hadn't been away from it at all. It was waiting to come out, so that tells me that there's no danger there, but you know, let's get to it.

KA: Do you think jazz musicians are being treated better within the music industry than they once were?

JL: Definitely. What's happened is that there's a new awareness in the business end of music, and jazz musicians, and musicians in general, are picking up on it. There are books out now, there's even a course at all the schools so that musicians are more prepared when they walk into a record company and they are told, you know, "Sign over your life." Musicians know better, and that's good.

KA: I heard a recording on the radio this morning that you did with Bill Evans in 1979 in Paris.

JL: Right, that was a radio broadcast in Paris, and at the time, it wasn't planned to be an album. But when Bill passed away, they were just looking for anything that was of a high quality recording-wise and performance-wise that they could use as an album, and that turned out to have some pretty good material on it. So there are going to be two releases from that, and two releases from the Village Vanguard in New York.

KA: You seem to be very disciplined, bot ! as a man and a musician. I see you as .. person who is out there working, making a living at your craft, and doing that for a certain set of goals. Then there's another part of you that might want to be doing something very different, but until that's ready, you're not going to do that.

JL: Exactly. I think that's hitting it right on the head. I mean, it makes more sense for me to be doing something that is achieving a goal, whatever that goal is in my life, than to just be doing nothing. And I don't know exactly what's ahead with this move we've made to the West Coast, but I'm hoping for good things, and I'm ready for them.

STAYING IN TUNE

MD readers can write to Hal Blaine in care of: Staying In Tune, Modern Drummer Magazine, 1000 Clifton Ave., Clifton, NJ 07013

by Hal Blaine

Q. I have 15-year-old Gretsch drums. I'm looking for a sound with double-headed toms and a single-headed bass that would give me a deep, round sound without any ring. I don't like Evans heads, and now use Pinstripes *on top and* Black Dots *on the bottom. I don't want the flat, plastic sound of too much muffling, but a cross between a live and studio deep sound that really sounds like a drum.*

S.R.
Whitestone, NY

A. I recently bought a Gretsch set myself that I use on jingles. Most drum lugs are spring packed and they will "sing." When you hit a drum, you're going to get noise. I take off both heads, take off the lug nut, take the mechanism out, wrap it with a piece of tape of any kind and put it back in. This makes a big difference in tonal quality. This might help you to get a bigger sound without that ring that bothers you. The head combinations can then be experimented with for maximum efficiency. The combination you're using sounds fine to me.

Q. I'm 15 and feel I'm progressing with my set playing. I love playing to the stereo, and I've been with a band and love the feeling of playing to a real audience with other musicians. My problem is reading. If eel I should be better for the four years I've been playing. When you started, did you have the problem of not wanting to practice all the time? I worry that other drummers my age are better than me.

H.K.
Newton, MA

A. Where's that old Yankee spirit? Sounds like you don't want to practice. That's what makes perfect. Get in there. It was the same with me. I couldn't really read until age 18. The sooner the better; the younger the easier. Instead of a comic book, put a music book in your hand. Instead of reaching for that radio dial, reach for your music studies first. It'll be slow but you'll progress. You must learn to read notes like words; in blocks, sentences and paragraphs. You can be hot stuff on stage, but when you get into a situation where you're not up to the job, you're in trouble. This is America. If you want to spend your life playing with little bands that don't read, that's your choice. You can listen to rock 'n' roll all day, but you're going to wind up in a rock 'n' roll basket someplace if that's all you do. Listen and learn. All kinds of music will help you be a more versatile player. Just for fun, pick a station on the radio that's not your kind of music and listen for a couple of hours. You can't live on burgers and fries all your life. Don't be lazy. There's no way to be a genius without practicing to be one. Do it.

Q. I'm a fairly new drummer and I'm always reading about "professional drummers." Exactly what is a professional drummer? What separates the pro from the amateur? How do you go pro?

M.C.
Johnson City, TN

A. A professional drummer is like any other professional; you get paid for what you're doing. It's not just a hobby. You're hired to play. An amateur plays for fun and works jobs that he might not get paid for. How do you become a professional? Practice, man, practice. The most important aspect is to study. A professional lawyer trains and so does a professional musician. Once you're a professional, you know your craft. Otherwise you're an amateur and you'll stay one. Some drummers are working at age 15. I was. Some have their first paid performance at a later age. It depends on when you start studying. It depends on how much you can absorb, and everyone is different. There's no formula. The transition from amateur to pro is also up to you. Once you are studying you'll meet other players, and before you know it, you'll have a band together. Then there will be places that will hire you because you've been practicing and sound good. If you're talking about big time, that's something else. That's when you get with an Elton John or a Frank Sinatra. There are always positions like this coming up. You have to be ready for them. Listening, practicing and studying are the ways to go.

Q. I'm 25 and for the last year I've had a pain on the back side of my right wrist and hand, opposite the palm. It's periodic and I have to rest it for a few weeks at a time. These occurrences have come more frequently, and about six months ago, I had to stop playing altogether to rest up. I saw two doctors who attribute this to "loose ligaments" in the wrist joint. I'm concerned about the long-term effects on my career. Have you encountered any problems of this nature in your own experience?

K.S.
Syracuse, NY

A. I suffered from a ganglia cyst from age 15 to 35, and right now, the middle finger of my right hand is in a cast. It's "mallet finger"; a severed tendon in the first digit. I had to go to a hand specialist about it. Recently, I've heard about laser techniques for healing all kinds of occupational and sports-related injuries to tendons and ligaments. There may be a sports medicine clinic in your area where they are practicing the latest techniques. Unfortunately, the more and harder you drum, the more pain you're going to create for yourself.

Q. I've been drumming 20 years and it seems like slow progress. Currently, I'm playing with a country-rock group about two nights a week. When it's time to play, I get depressed and fight going. Same for band practice. The bass player has trouble learning the current tunes, and somebody always seems to buy some beer and a couple of guys smoke pot. It's hard to practice more than I do. I'm reading books on creative imagination but don't seem to get much from them. I think I'm in a rut. I've tried going with an "up" attitude, but I always leave on a downer. When I get to the gig, I fall into playing okay but it's hard to be enthusiastic like when I started. One of the guys in the band is from Japan, and he's mentioned that he wants me to go there with him and form a band. Is there still a chance for a 36-year-old fellow to get somewhere with his drumming?

J.A.
At water, CA

A. I've been through the same thing many, many times. First, one of the best things for people who are depressed is exercise. Start doing some. Aerobics really clear my head. If you're really sick of playing, don't play anymore! So many winners quit a little too early, though. You never know what's around the next corner. The fact that your friend wants you to go to Japan sounds fantastic; the opportunity of a lifetime. What have you got to lose? If I were you I'd take the job. It seems like you're not married, but if you are, get some feedback from your wife. Maybe you're getting some negative feedback from her. It takes a special person to understand a musical person. The books you're reading can only help if you really *go* with them and apply them. Thank goodness you're working when so many drummers aren't. None of us can hide from the responsibilities and involvements that make up our lives. We have to cope with these bad spells. Consider training other people. Teaching. With your experience, you could carry on the tradition. I think the rut is temporary. It's not too far-fetched to think about forming your own band. Your own thing could give you the incentive to get cooking again.

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Paul T. Riddle

Q. For readers who 'd like to buy albums that most represent your drumming, which ones would you recommend?

Album	Artist	Label
A New Life	Marshall Tucker Band	Warner Brothers
Where We All Belong	Marshall Tucker Band	Warner Brothers
Carolina Dreams	Marshall Tucker Band	Warner Brothers
Together Forever	Marshall Tucker Band	Warner Brothers
Tenth	Marshall Tucker Band	Warner Brothers
JustUs	Marshall Tucker Band	Warner Brothers

Q. Which drummers on which records do you listen to most for inspiration?

Album	Artist	Drummer	Label
Greatest Hits	Brubeck Quartet	Joe Morello	Columbia
Dad Loves His Work	James Taylor	Rick Marotta	Warner Brothers
We're All Together Again For The First Time	Brubeck Quartet	Alan Dawson	Atlantic
The Main Force	Elvin Jones	Elvin Jones	Vanguard
V.S.O.P. The Quintet	V.S.O.P. Quintet	Tony Williams	Columbia
Apple Juice	Tom Scott	Steve Gadd	Columbia
Three Quartets	Chick Corea	Steve Gadd	Warner Brothers
The First Taste of Sin	Cold Blood	Sandy McKee	Reprise
Keep The Fire	Kenny Loggins	Tris Imboden	Columbia
Live In London	Buddy Rich	Buddy Rich	RCA
Live At Fillmore East	Allman Brothers	Butch Trucks & Jaimo Johnson	Capricorn
Sea Level	Sea Level	Jaimo Johnson	Capricorn
Waiting For Columbus	Little Feat	Richie Hayward	Warner Brothers

When I started playing, I got heavily into Joe Morello and I was listening to Dave Brubeck records all the time. Joe Morello's playing was so clean. To this day, the drum solo on the original "Take Five" is still one of my favorite drum *sounds* of all time. It's so natural sounding. The reason I listed *Greatest Hits* is because it's got "Three To Get Ready," "Blue Rondo A La Turk" and "Take Five." Those were the Morello tunes that really got me, when I was young.

I got into Alan Dawson because my dad took me to a jazz festival in Charlotte when I was in the eighth grade. It was the first time that the band on *We're All Together Again* played together. Jack Six was on bass, Gerry Mulligan on baritone sax, Alan Dawson on drums and Brubeck on piano. When they recorded this live record, it was great because it took me back to when I was a kid. My dream when I was younger was to go to Berklee, mainly to study under Alan Dawson. Again, "Take Five" on this album is a killer! It's totally different from the original recording with Morello, but it's good in its own way. Alan always plays great.

The drum sound on *Dad Loves His Work* is phenomenal, first of all. I love James Taylor, second of all. I like the way Rick Marotta sounds because the stuff is laid back, but he digs in with it. It's got some *umph* to it. There is an open, real funky part in the song "Hour That The Morning Comes" where he plays his ass off. Also, Rick really listens to the songs, which is great

I listed *The Main Force* for Elvin Jones because that's the band he had when I saw him for the first time at the Village Vanguard in New York City. Then I went down to see him about three nights in a row with that same band at The Lighthouse in California. That's why I really like that album a lot. What do you say about Elvin?

I've listened to a lot of Tony Williams' stuff with Miles Davis for years. I also listened to his own albums, like *Believe It* and *Million Dollar Legs.* Then I heard about the V.S.O.P. tour. I was lucky enough to see them. It blew me away. It was wonderful. It was totally acoustic jazz miked through a great P.A.; loud and so forceful. Tony's drums sounded like cannons. That was the first time I'd heard jazz at that volume through a great P.A. It was like hearing a rock band almost. It was pure and clean, yet really forceful. I love everything about the first V.S.O.P. record.

Apple Juice got me off because Steve Gadd played live on it, with Ralph MacDonald and Marcus Miller. I just like the music on the record. Plus, one of my favorites, Dr. John, sings a tune. If you enjoy Gadd's playing, I think it's a record you would get a kick out of.

Three Quartets gives you the *great* other side of Steve Gadd. It's great that you hear

a guy play funk, and lay things down so straight ahead and so beautifully; and then he turns around and plays on a record like *Three Quartets.*

Being from South Carolina, I came up listening to a lot of things like Wilson Pickett, Otis Redding, and James Brown. When the horn bands started happening, like Cold Blood, Tower of Power and Ten Wheel Drive, I really liked them, and I liked the singer with Cold Blood. Tommy Caldwell and I used to listen to these Cold Blood records for hours! The record before *First Taste, Sysiphus,* was also good, but Donny Hathaway wrote a bunch of the tunes on *First Taste.* If you can find it, it's a great record. Sandy McKee plays drums, and he plays a lot. He's kind of all over the place, but he plays great. I copped a lot of licks from this guy.

I've heard Tris Imboden play with Kenny Loggins since he first joined the band. The Tucker band played a show once where Kenny Loggins was opening, we were in the middle, and Fleetwood Mac was closing. Tris plays with a lot of heart. I had the pleasure of seeing him play with Firefall. The guy plays great. I just really enjoy his playing. I think his heart's in the right place.

I guess I've got every record that Buddy has done with his big band. *Live In London* is one of my favorites musically. I've always loved *Swingin' New Big Band* with the original version of "West Side Story," but *Live In London* is musically great and the charts are wonderful. I always enjoyed hearing Buddy play.

I think *Live At The Fillmore East* is one of the best live recordings I've ever heard for a rock 'n' roll band. When they do those breakdowns, especially when Butch is on the timpani, all of a sudden it sounds like you're hearing the drums in the hall. You're not hearing the mic' right on top of it. Tom Dowd told me that they did this by leaving the vocal mic's open, so you're just hearing the ambience of the hall. It sounds so beautiful. If you listen to some of the things that Jaimo plays in the background, man, you'll hear great cymbal work and press rolls on the snare drum. Jaimo's been one of the biggest influences as a friend and musically since I was 18 years old. Butch Trucks plays well on this record too.

Having had the pleasure to hear Duane Allman play live several times when I was 17 or 18 years old—he always inspires me when I hear him play guitar, whether it's on Aretha Franklin records, with the Allman Brother's Band, on "Layla" or whatever.

The reason I listed Jaimo on the first Sea Level record is because it's a good one. It's a treat to hear Jaimo play by himself.

I have the whole collection of Little Feat records. They're one of my favorite bands in the world. I chose *Waiting For Columbus,* their live album, because it's a good overall picture of Ritchie Hayward and the band. Sam Clayton on percussion is excellent also.

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continued on page 118

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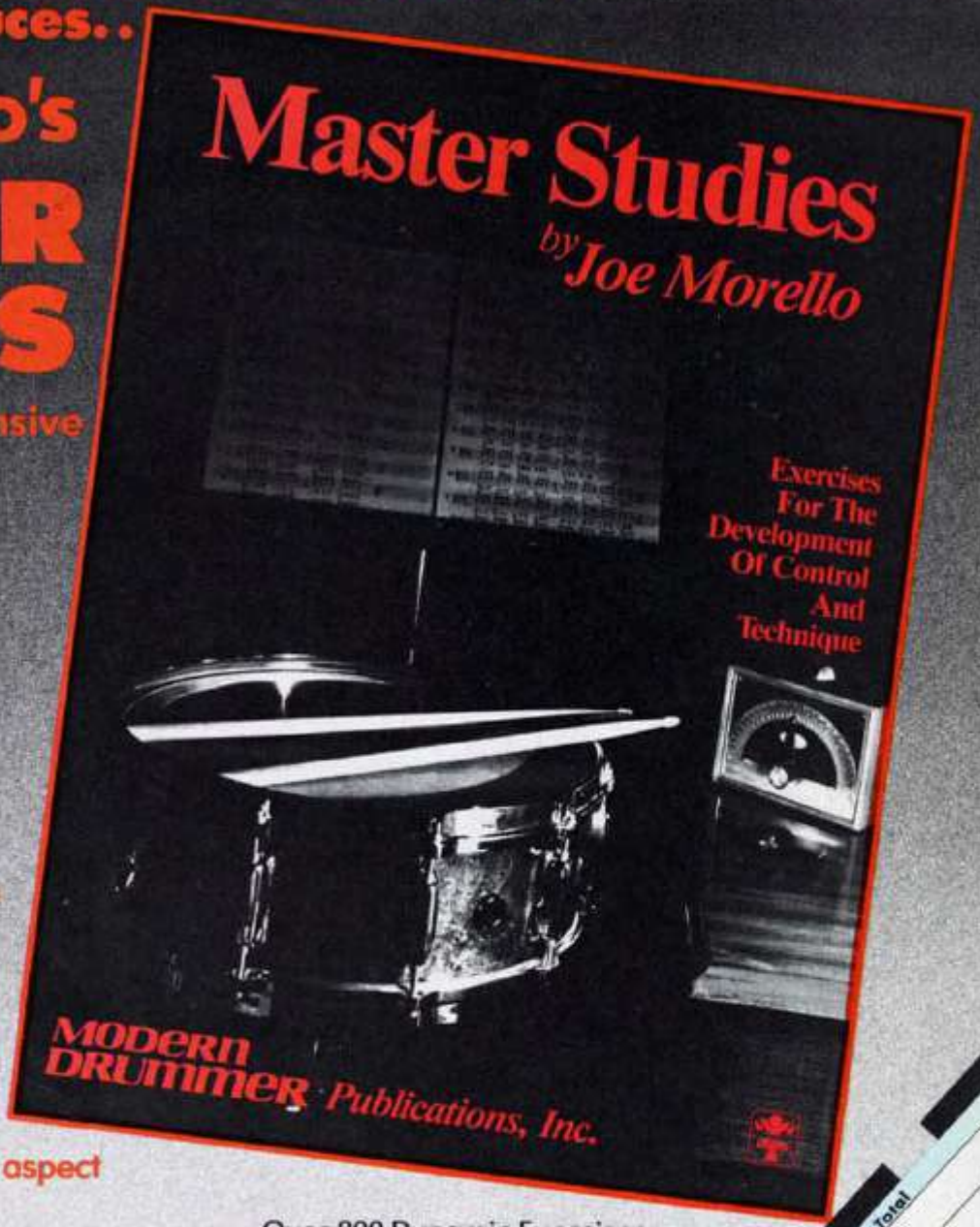
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Q. I own a set of Rogers drums. I think they're early '60s vintage. The set is two 12" toms, a 16" floor tom, a 20" bass drum and a 6 1/2 x 14 brass shell, chrome-plated *Power/one* snare. The set has *Swivomatic* hardware, old style bass lug T-handles and the drumkey style tom legs. Can you tell me what year this set was made? Should I hang onto the snare in hopes it will become a valuable vintage piece?

K.H.
Humboldt, AZ

A. We'd suggest looking for serial numbers on the drums. They may be on the inside of the shells. You can send this information and/or a snapshot of the drumset to Rogers, and they would probably be able to tell you how old the drums are. Because a drum is old doesn't mean that it's going to be a "valuable vintage piece." Rogers can probably tell you how rare that snare is. If it's valuable and you're simply interested in collecting old drums then keep it. But, the real question is, is it a good sounding drum? This makes it more valuable from an artistic as well as a monetary point of view. If it sounds good, it would be worth keeping even if it's only worth ten cents.

Q. Playing rock music, I've broken many heads but never a bass drum head. In the short time that I have been using a Remo CS head on my bass drum I've almost gone through it! Is this normal? What, if anything, can I do to keep this from happening, or reduce the rate of wear?

D.P.
Canadaigua, NY

A. No, this is not normal. Theoretically, a CS *should take twice the bashing an* Ambassador *would. Some people make a patch out of an old head and put it where the bass drum beater makes contact with the head. This is not recommended for studio playing. It's possible that the angle of your beater ball is stressing-the head unevenly, striking the surface in an oblique way instead of flat on. You may be playing harder these days, grinding the pedal into the head rather than allowing the beater to rebound. On the other hand, you may have gotten a bad head, despite quality control at Remo.*

Q. I have a Rogers, Chrome *Super Ten* (2786) snare drum. It's the best snare I ever had. It's six-and-a-half inches deep with single tensioning. I wonder .if you could give me some information on this?

G.A.
Long Beach, CA

A. If the number in parentheses is the serial number, then that is considered to be relatively low. Rogers drums are not past the 96,000 mark. It's a ten-lug drum that is probably 17 or 18 years old, which means that it was made in Dayton, Ohio. Single tensioning probably means that there was only one lug used and that was the Holiday *model.*

Q. What bass drum pedal with a solid footboard has the quickest response and is also very durable? Also, a friend showed me a copy of MD with many of John Bonham's beats. Which issue was this?

S.L.
Lake George, NY

A. A quick response has more to do with who's *playing than the pedal itself. However, there are some pedals with better reputations than others. The best bet is to visit one or more music stores and play as many different bass drum pedals as you can. Buy the one that feels best to you. The Feb/Mar '81 MD had the Bonham beats, which were transcribed by James Morton.*

Q. I've been having some problems with our sound engineer. He wants to put *Hydraulic* heads on the drums, plus foam and tape. I tried it and the response was horrible. Without mic's, it was a nightmare. *I* liked a white *Ambassador* on top and a clear *Diplomat* on the bottom, for both sound and response. He said these heads ring and "dead is better." I've seen drummers like Roger Taylor, Steve Smith and John Bonham, who use no muffling. What's the secret?

S.P.
Bloomfield, NJ

A. The "secret" is for you to decide what kind of drum sound you *want and experiment with your engineer until you can achieve it. The engineer can only maximize what a drummer gives him, but, who cares how good the drums sound in the abstract, if you are playing badly because of poor stick response? Professional sound engineers try to develop open relations with drummers so that the difference in their philosophies as to what sounds good can be resolved. A statement like "dead is better" merely reflects some insecurity on the part of the engineer. Try your own head combinations and leave a little ring on the tom-tom. With a little echo, you'll get an enormous tom-tom sound* a la *Bonham. I think the solution to your dilemma lies more in the EQ and board mix than in head choice.*

Q. I have a 1952 wood-shell set that I want to put a custom paint job on. Will the paint affect the sound any, or should I paint over the plastic covering? The set already has a primer on the inside of the shells.

C.M.
San Antonio, TX

A. Paint or lacquer will not adhere properly to plastic. To compensate for this you may find yourself piling layer upon layer of paint and building up too thick a layer that can adversely affect sound, as the heads will not be able to seat properly. Drum shell diameter tolerances are pretty critical in relation to hoop size. A Iso, certain paints and lacquers contain solvents that will eat into the plastic.

According to drum customizer Pat Foley, "The thing you have to be most careful about is removing the plastic. An older set from the '50s is most likely mahogany ply beneath the plastic, and it is porous. The glue gets in there and makes it harder to remove without taking big chunks of the wood with it. Use a heat gun like they use for setting tile—mine is a Crane—and run that over the shell while a friend slowly *peels the covering. Heat will soften the glue enough to prevent gouging. If the shell* is *mahogany, you 'II have to get the glue out of the wood's pores with acetone or another solvent before continuing."*

The type of finish you 'II use will depend on the type of wood the shell is made from. If it's maple, you can use most finishes. If it's mahogany, because of the pores, you must take more care. Lacquer will tend to shrink back into the pores when dry, giving you an uneven finish. Use sealer to fill the pores before painting or lacquering.

Removing the plastic tends to improve sound, if done correctly: Paints and lacquers won't hurt the sound.

Q. Please tell me, what exactly is a "rimshot"?

P.D.C.
Rockville, MD

A. A rimshot is generally played on a snare drum. It's played by striking the rim of the snare and the batter head at the same time. The tip of the stick strikes the head about dead center, as the shaft of the stick hits the rim. The effect is usually used for accenting.

DRUMS HAVE BEEN ROUND FOR AGES

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SIMMONS

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UPDATE

by Robyn Flans

A live album by Maynard Ferguson came out this fall with **Gregg Bissonette** on drums. Recorded with a mobile unit, the album includes six new tunes taken from the performance of two sets.

"It was a lot of pressure, but it was fun," Gregg said. "Everybody was real, real up for it. It was the kind of thing that couldn't be used if there were any big mistakes. Everybody was really concentrating, though, and I think it was as good as the band has ever sounded. Maynard is hot as ever. He has so much positive energy and his playing is as strong as ever at 55."

Being on the road so much, though, isn't it difficult keeping it fresh? "It would seem like it would be, but with a leader like Maynard, it isn't. We've got a bunch of guys in their 20's and he's got more energy than all of us combined. Just being on stage with a guy with so much energy is really motivating. I've never been in a group where so many guys got along so well either. We're all a bunch of close friends, and that right there helps keep the music fresh.

"One of the great things about touring is that we're always in a city where there are other groups playing. One night we all saw Journey, and Maynard was really into it. He's so open to different kinds of music; very into change and that's what keeps him going. We also do a lot of listening. We're constantly picking up tapes on the road from Journey to Peter Erskine, Elvin, Tony, and the Police. Being on the road, you might be on the bus for 10 hours and you can get so much listening in in that time. You can't actually practice on the drumset, but listening can oftentimes be just as important as practicing."

Harvey Mason has also been utilizing his many talents this last year. Early in the year, he produced a Lee Ritenour LP and accompanied the guitarist on tour for about three and a half months. "I love playing live and I'd like to do even more," says Mason.

He is constantly writing. Most recently, his compositions have turned up on Tom Scott's digital album (written with Scott) on which he also played drums, on Bob James' LP (with whom he also toured briefly in August) and Ritenour s Japanese digital recording. He also played on a movie with Tom Scott called *Going Berserk,* and another movie with Earl Klugh and Pat Williams. In August, he began work on the second Ritenour album for the year, as producer. In this aspect of his work, Mason finds he prefers not playing. "It's hard for me to remain objective. I kind of get into what I'm doing and how I like to have it played, rather than looking at the overall picture, so it's better if I step back a little. I choose someone to play drums if I think of a song and hear that drummer playing in that particular mold."

Having recorded his own and others' projects, written and produced, what is his current goal? "I want to continue to do it all. I'm still really young, but you can't play forever. You have to prepare for the future too because things change—styles, trends, everything. You have to stay on top of things and be prepared to move into something else."

L.A. studio drummer **Mike Baird** has been utilizing his talents recently in a variety of projects. In syndication currently is a 90-minute, late-night show called *Thicke of the Night* with host Alan Thicke, in which Mike plays drums and acts. A cross between *Saturday Night Live* and *David Letterman,* the show allows Baird to use his acting talents, something he did even before becoming one of L.A. "s busiest session men. The show only tapes three days a week, two shows each day, so it leaves him plenty of time for his other activities. Some ot the artists he s worked with recently are Donna Summer, Kenny Rogers, Sheena Easton, Barnes and Barnes, Herb Alpert, Michael Lovesmith, Barry Manilow and Rick Springfield. (Baird also has a featured role in Springfield's upcoming film *Hard to Hold as* the band's drummer.) He has also been called upon to do an abundance of overdubs in the studio.

"A lot of my gigs recently have been replacing drum machines, adding stuff to drum machines or even replacing an original drum track, which sometimes can be very difficult. But that's a challenge. If the track is real out of hand and the time is all over the place, I won't take the gig because it's only going to make me look bad, but normally it's just replacing a machine. I love that because it allows me to be creative. I can do really just what I want to do. It used to be that you walked into a date and everybody wanted the same thing—the same sound, the same groove. That's changing now because the industry is changing. I feel that people are willing to take chances right now."

Keep an eye out for a January release of a film called *Playing for Keeps;* **Levon Helm** acts in it as well as sings the theme song. He also plays the harmonica, while **Aynsley Dunbar** plays drums. Dunbar also can be heard on Paul Kantner's recently released second solo album, *Planet Earth Rock and Roll Orchestra.* In offtime, Starship drummer **Don Baldwin** has been playing Northern California gigs with a group called Little Gadget and the Soulful Twilites. Congratulations to Stray Cat drummer **Jim Phantom** who is officially engaged to actress Brit Ekland. **Denny Carmassi** on Kim Carnes' upcoming album. **Carl Palmer** is on the road with Asia. **Bill Bruford** back in the studio with King Crimson. **Brent Brace** has been working with guitar legend George Van Eps, recently having recorded two albums (Van Eps' first with a band). Brace also recently released his own fusion LP, *Children of the Earth.* Drummer/vocalist **Dick Dodd** is back with the popular '60s group, the Standells, along with two other original members. **David Palmer** is no longer with ABC; **Andy Newmark** will be on the group's next album. The Jerry Garcia Band's new drummer is **David Kemper,** previously of T-Bone Burnett's band. **Jim Fox** is currently in the studio with Patrick Simmons. **Dave Hunt** played music for *Alice.* **Phil Rudd** is no longer with AC/DC. Drummer/percussionist **Bobby Sanabria** is presently performing with Mongo Santamaria and can be heard on Mongo's latest album, *Mongo Magic,* on Roulette Records. Sanabria is also teaching and performing in the New York City area with his own octet, Ascension. Drummer **Andy Ward,** formerly of Camel, now with Marillion. **Newman Baker** is working this month in New York with Reggie Workman's band, Top Shelf. **Barry Keane** is the new drum/percussion columnist for *Canadian Musician* magazine. **Rick Latham** is now with the Chuck Rainey band, Rainey Man.

Drum Market continued from page 113

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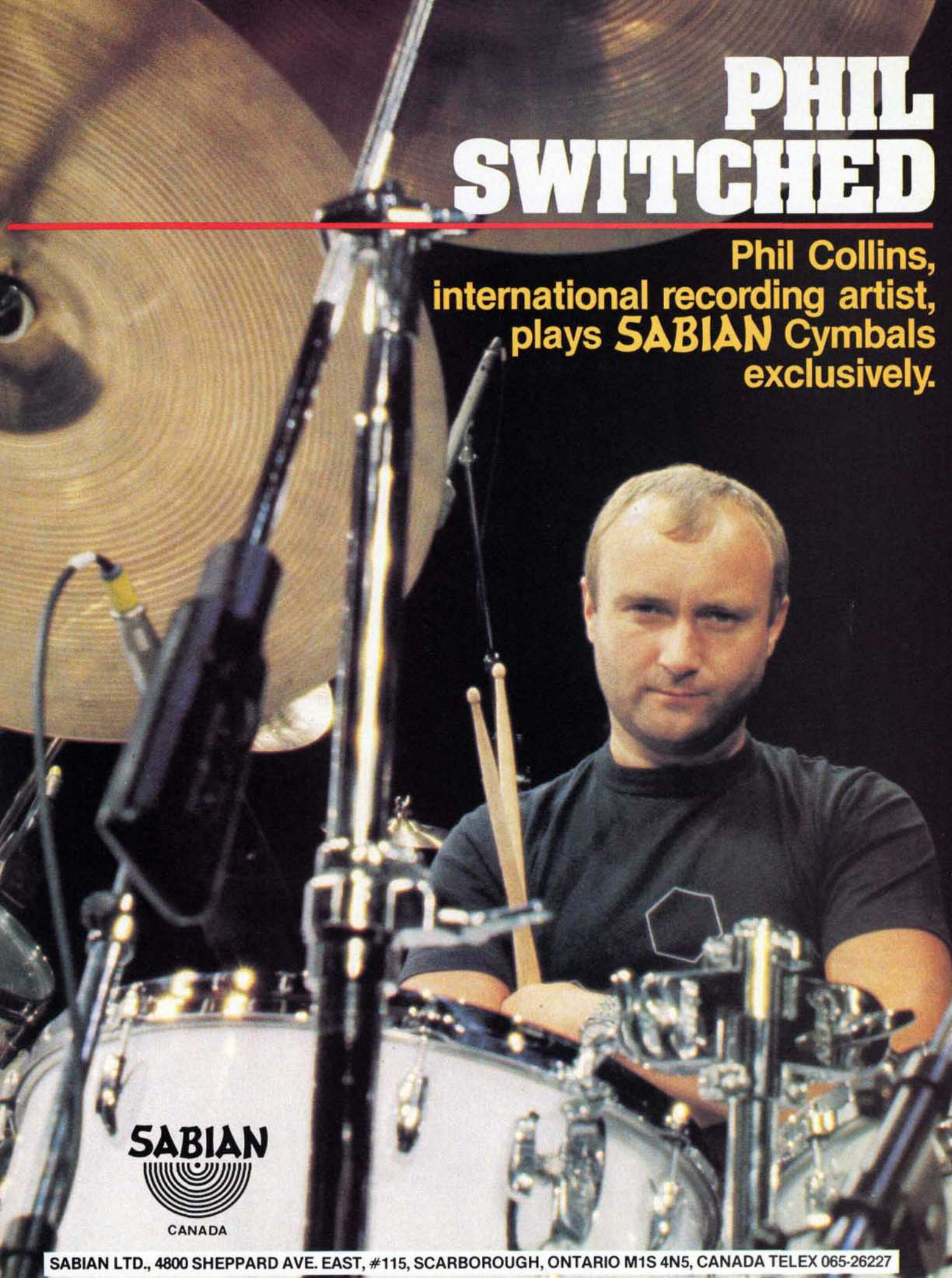

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INDUSTRY HAPPENINGS

KARL DUSTMAN JOINS GRETSCH

Charlie Roy, President of Kustom Gretsch, announced the recent appointment of Karl Dustman as Percussion Marketing Manager for Gretsch. Dustman has been recognized in the percussion industry for over 11 years in a variety of marketing and educational positions with Ludwig Industries. Prior to joining Gretsch, Dustman was Marketing Director for Ludwig-Musser, implementing an educational clinic and symposium program that has gained international acclaim. His responsibilities included the entire advertising function, collateral material preparation, and artist relations and development.

PASIC '83— KNOXVILLE

This year's Percussive Arts Society International Convention is scheduled from November 3rd through 6th, at the World's Fair Convention Center in Knoxville, Tennessee. Registration opens at 8:00 a.m. on Thursday, Nov. 3rd, with exhibits opening at 9:00 a.m. on Friday, Nov 4th. Each day will be literally packed with clinics, demonstrations and concerts. Saturday evening's banquet, featuring Louie Bellson as the special guest speaker, will also feature an array of door prizes donated by percussion manufacturers and publishers. Saturday night's concert will be highlighted by the world premiere performance of Louie Bellson's *Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra,* featuring Louie and Peter Erskine, assisted by guest soloists and a full symphony orchestra. For complete details contact: PAS, Box 697, Urbana, IL 61801. (217) 367-4098.

YAMAHA ARTIST ADVISORY BOARD

Jim Coffin, Percussion Development Manager for Yamaha Musical Products, announced the formation of an Artist Advisory Board comprised of leading drummers who actively endorse Yamaha System Drums. "This board will serve as a means of establishing stronger connections between Yamaha and the contemporary percussion scene, so that Yamaha can share common experiences and be aware of the drummer's needs, as well as provide a means for artists to participate more directly in Yamaha's ongoing product development program," said Coffin.

At a special meeting held in New York earlier this year, Coffin met with a variety of Yamaha endorsers including Yogi Horton, Brian Brake, Buddy Williams, Peter Erskine, Horacee Arnold, Rick Marotta and Ed Soph.

The Yamaha Artist Advisory Board will include leading Yamaha artists and members of the percussion community, Jim Coffin, Mike Bennett (director of marketing, Yamaha Musical Products), Jim Peterszack of Potsdam University, and Steven Ross of Steven Ross & Associates. This board will be working on special projects in addition to artist endorsements vis-a-vis advertising, promotion and special events.

HADJOPOULOS & VELEZ ENDORSE LP

Latin Percussion proudly adds its newest member, Sue Hadjopoulos, to its endorsement program. Sue has recently completed a world tour with Joe Jackson and a soon-to-be completed movie soundtrack, *Mike's Murder.*

Gerardo Velez, percussionist for Spyro Gyra, has joined the drummers in the Latin, jazz and rock spectrum in incorporating LP's new *Thunder Timbs,* expanded-size timbales. The shells are 15" and 16" in diameter and 10" deep.

APPICE BATTLE WINNER

Edward "Sonny" Emory, Grand Prize Winner of the 1983 Carmine Appice National Drum Battle Tour Finals, gets an additional boost from Appice while the 13 celebrity drummer judges look on and cheer. The finals, held over the July 4th Weekend at Griffith Park in Los Angeles, were sponsored by Mattel Electronics/Synsonics Drums, and co-promoted by L.A. radio station, KLOS-FM.

Emory, from Atlanta, Georgia, went home with grand prizes that included a full Slingerland drum outfit, matching Zildjian cymbals, a Fostex-A75 Multitracker cassette recorder, a selection of Mattel Electronics products, and the new album, *Party Tested,* by Carmine Appice and Rick Derringer's DNA Band.

Pictured are (back row, L-R) Bruce Gary, Myron Grombacher (Pat Benatar), Sandy Gennaro, Brian Glasscock (Motels), Kelly Keagy (Night Ranger), Joe Benson (KLOS-FM DJ). (Front row, L-R) Alan Gratzer (REO Speedwagon), Bun E. Carlos (Cheap Trick), Michael Derosier, Emory, Appice, Bruce Crump, Chester Thompson (Genesis), and Vinne Appice (Dio).

Jeff Porcaro

Photo: Karen Diercksmeier

Separations: Sun Color Service

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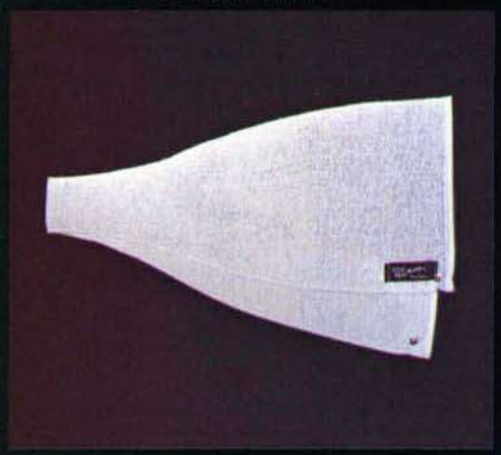

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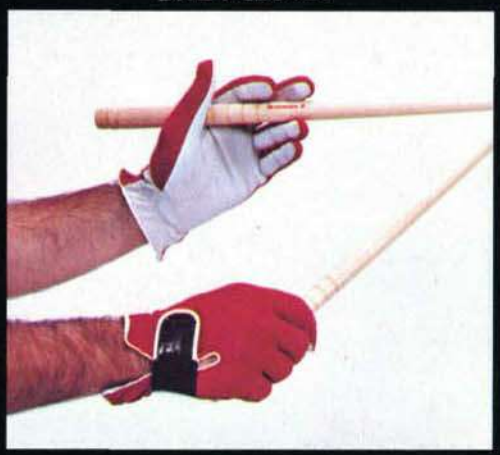

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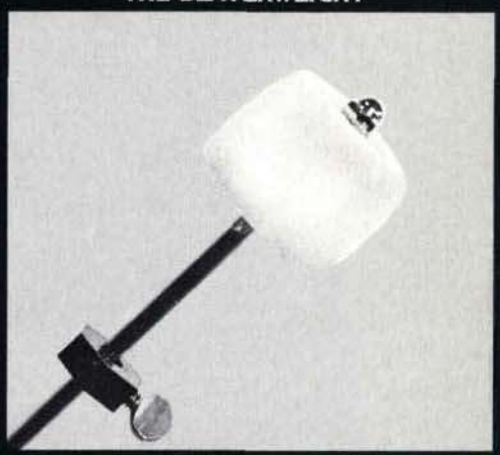

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THEM.P.C.

The On-Site Energy Music Group introduces the Music Percussion Computer. From the M.P.C. Electronics Co. Ltd. of England, comes a new concept in electronic drum machines—the M.P.C. interfaces with a computer (the Timex *1000* or Sinclair *Zx81)* and links up with any TV set to read out a graphic display of the rhythms programmed or as they are being programmed.

The Music Percussion Computer master module consists of eight touch-sensitive pads, able to be played by either hands or sticks. The pad arrangement has two options—bass drum, snare, open hi-hat, closed hi-hat and four descending toms, or bass, snare, open hi-hat, closed hi-hat, two toms, cymbals and a handclap.

External accessory modules from the original Kit Drum System, The Clap, The Synth, the Tymp or the foot-activated bass drum pedal may be linked into the M.P.C. or be played separately. The bass drum pedal frees the performer for rhythms with his hands.

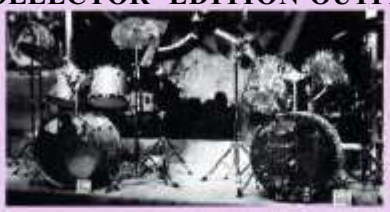
There is an on-board processor to program sequences and add accents where needed. The performer may also play manually simultaneously with the internal memory to add rolls, fills and special beats that are not already programmed. All programming is done in real time.

Once the link-up to the Timex 7000 or Sinclair *Zx81* has been made, more complex programming and storage is available. Twenty-six measures can be programmed and arranged into sequences to compose songs. Up to 199 variations, including all time signatures, are possible.

The Music Percussion Computer retails for $1,299.00. Its interface retails for $129.00.

For further information, contact: On-Site Energy Music Group, 3000 Marcus Avenue, Suite 2W7, Lake Success, NY 11042. (516-775-5510).

GRETSCH CENTENNIAL COLLECTOR EDITION OUTFITS



Gretsch celebrates 100 years of drum building history by introducing a special limited edition series of outfits. Regular 6-ply all-wood shells are enhanced with "Centennial-only" finishes of *Birdseye Maple, Carpathian Elm* or *Burl Walnut.* The series comes equipped standard with triple-brass plated drum hardware, hoops, and tom holders. Reflective gold mylar heads are also standard. For a premium price on these wood finishes, Gretsch is limiting production of the collector series to only 100 outfits, regardless of choice in finish or any outfit configuration.

Each drum is numbered with a commemorative brass plaque including the signature of President Charlie Roy, after his personal inspection of each drum. A Gretsch certificate of authenticity is provided to the owner along with a custom monogrammed and embroidered Gretsch Centennial satin jacket, which is included in the price of the outfit. A future promotion is planned listing those select owners who purchased these 100 Centennial outfits, and the corresponding number of their set.

For price and specification information contact: Gretsch Marketing Services, P.O. Box 1250, Gallatin, Tennessee 37066.

AMIR CHINA AND HI-HAT CYMBALS

New 18- and 20-inch China Boy Amir Cymbals by the Avedis Zildjian Company, respond with a quick, brash Oriental sound "for unique crashes and unusual accents," according to President Armand Zildjian. The Amir line expansion also includes a 15-inch matched hi-hat. "These sound deeper than the 14-inch hi-hats we currently offer, and respond with more power and clarity," says Mr. Zildjian.

Simmons introduces a Portable Suitcase Kit, designed for use with the SDS5 Electronic Drum Synthesizer. The kit features a flight case fitted with seven 4 1/4" pads which, when hooked up to the *SDS5* rack, gives the player access to all the Simmons sounds. The kit can be played with sticks, mallets or fingers.

For further information, contact Glyn Thomas at Simmons Group Centre Inc., P.O. Box 1444, Reseda, CA 91335. (213)884-2653.

PAISTE OFFERS TWO TOOLS FOR DRUMMERS

Paiste introduces two educational tools: the "Paiste Drum Shop Calendar" and the "Drummer's Guide to Paiste Cymbal Sounds."

The drum shop calendar, a poster-sized chart, offers twelve months of the year at a glance for scheduling (good through May '84) and features brilliant Swiss photography of the six popular Paiste cymbal lines.

The "Drummer's Guide to Paiste Cymbal Sounds," designed in the "slide rule" format, explains the various characteristics of each Paiste cymbal and offers more than 260 choices of specific cymbal sounds. It is divided into three cymbal types: ride cymbals, crash cymbals and hi-hats.

According to Paiste Sales Coordinator, Greg Perry, "We know that there are many drummers who do not live in metropolitan areas and are not exposed to the variety of products that large-city dwellers are used to seeing on a daily basis. They are not able to physically sample many different cymbals in side-by-side comparisons. For them, the calendar exhibits the various cymbal lines we have available. It should also help familiarize store personnel with our six lines. The Guide will be particularly helpful to young players not yet able to hear the subtle nuances between different sizes and models. This Guide will help lead them to an awareness of different sound qualities. We believe that these tools will have something to offer all drummers, the young and the experienced alike."

The Guide is available to all Paiste dealers and can be ordered direct through Paiste America. Posters are available to consumers by writing to Paiste, including three dollars to cover shipping and handling. Contact Paiste America, 460 Atlas Street, Brea CA 92621.

THE 1983 TAMA EASTERN U.S.A. CLINIC TOUR

The 1983 Tama Drum Clinic Tour rolls across Eastern America this fall with two of the world's most notable heavy hitters — Billy Cobham and Simon Phillips.

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SIMON PHILLIPS

- 11/7 Hewgleys Music KNOXVILLE, TN.
- 11/8 Akron Music Center AKRON, OH.
- 11/9 Moore's ABC Music EVANSVILLE, IN.
- 11/10 Al Nalli Music ANN ARBOR, MI.
- 11/12 Quigley Music Inc. KANSAS CITY, MO.
- 11/13 Drum Headquarters ST. LOUIS, MO.
- 11/14 Drums Ltd. CHICAGO, IL.

NOTE: Schedule subject to change without notice. See your local dealer for details.

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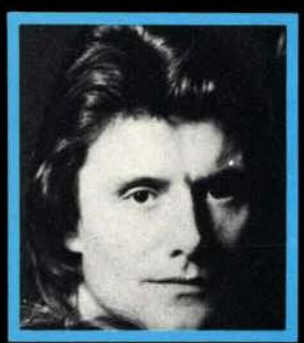
Calato 66
Camber Cymbals 97
Cano Electronics 34
Casino Percussion Products 67
Class Act Accessory Co. 38
Comfy Seat Mfg Co. 72
Corder Drum Co. 40
Countryman Associates 50
Creative Drum Shop 64
Cymbal Safe 40
D & F Products 73
D.C. Publications 107
DCI Music Video 31
Dean Markley Stix 46/47
Dial-A-Drum 94
Discount Music and Drum World 68
Drum Equipment Co. 73
Drum Headquarters 99
Drum Torque 41
Drum Wear 44,87
Drum Workshop 48
Drummers Collective 101
Drummers World 101
Drums Ltd. 105
Drums Unlimited 41
Duraline 88,92,96
Electro Harmonix 43
Freeport Music 99
Gretsch Drum Co. ..... Inside Back Cover
Hardy Technologies 44
Hewgleys Music Shop 107
Imperial Creations 100
J.C.'s Drum Charts 67
Latin Percussion 33,52,106
Long Island Drum Center 104
L.T. Lug Lock 85
Ludwig Industries 39,54/55
Manny's Music Store 103
Maxwin Drums 45
MD Back Issues 36
MD Library 114/115
MD T-shirt 111
Maxtone Drums 68
Mechanical Music 92
Mel Bay Publications 58
Modern Drum Shop 85
NJ Percussion Center 45
Noteworks 60
Overland Music Studios 72
Paiste Cymbals 7
Pastore Music 67
Pearl International 53,70/71
Percussion Center 99
Percussion Institute of Technology 69
Percussion World 82
Pied Piper 94
Precision Drum Co. 94
Premier Drums 3
Promark 66,90
Quiet Tone 51
Remo 49
Resonant Drum Sticks 101
Rick Latham Advanced Funk Studies 106
R.I.M.S. 80
Rock Independence 94
Rogers Drum Co. 5
Rolls Music Center 74
Rug Caddy 121
Sabian Cymbals 64,69,119
Sam Ash Music Stores 74
Samson Chops 87
"Set-The-Pace" Pedal Practice Pads 58
Shure Bros. 81
Simmons Drums 117
Slingerland Drums 61
Slobeat Percussion Products 83
Sonor Drums 89
Sound Vader 75
Staccato Drum Co. 100
Stanley Spector School of Drumming 109
Stro Corporation of America 59
Tama Drums ..... 62/63,123,Inside Front Cover
The Kit 65
Valley Drum Shop 104
Vic Firth Sticks 37,91
Yamaha Drums 93
Zampino's Drum Shop 95
Zildjian Cymbals ..... Outside Back Cover



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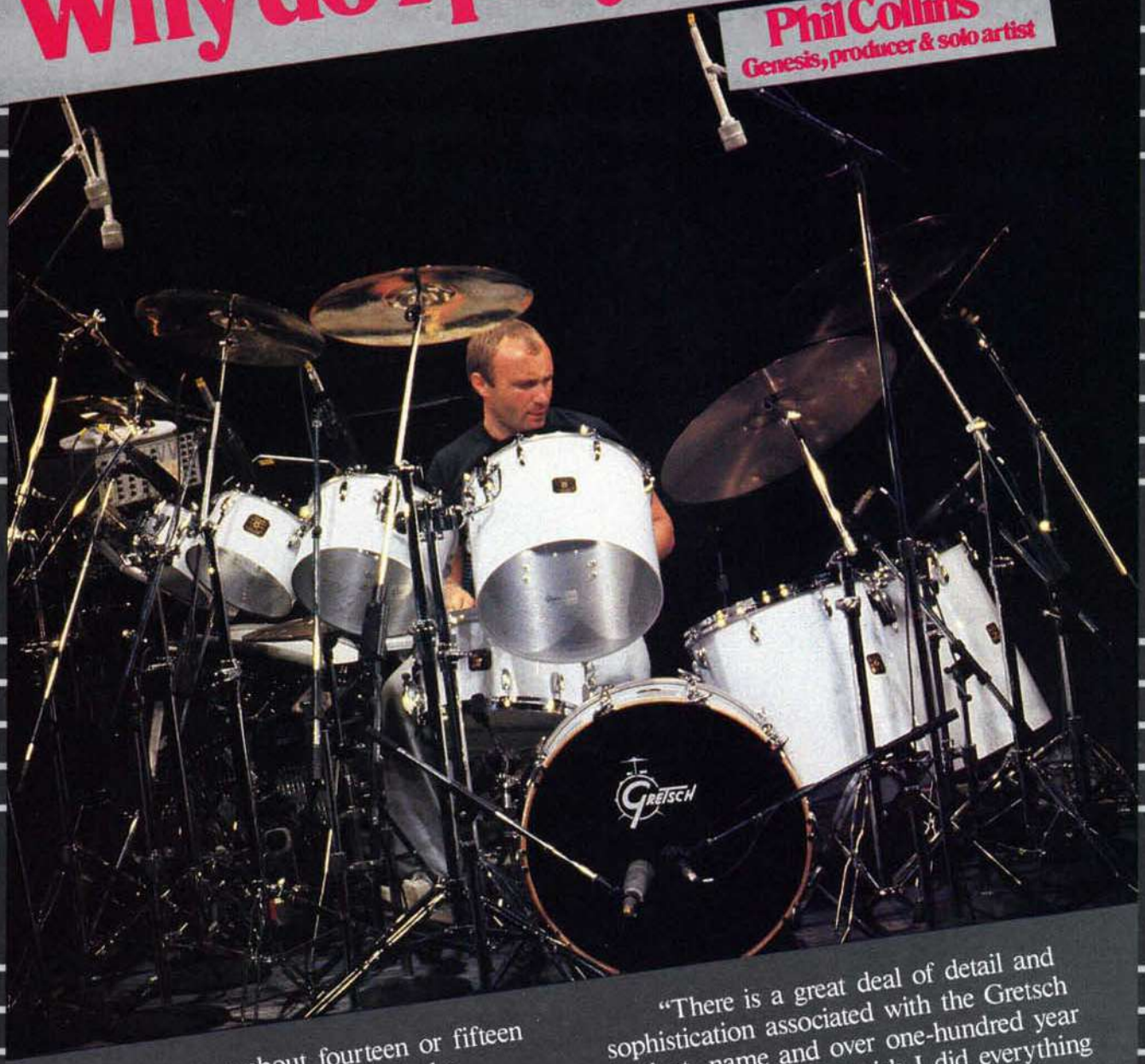

"When I was about fourteen or fifteen years old, a good friend of mine who played drums in Joe Cocker's grease-band was playing Gretsch. I persuaded him to sell me his kit. From that moment, I was a Gretsch player. I still own that kit and it still sounds great today."

"Gretsch has always been 'a drummer's drum' and when the opportunity developed allowing me to play Gretsch again, I jumped at the chance."

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STEVE GADD. HOT ON ZILDJIAN.

The man is hot! And he should be. No less than Chick Corea put it this way: "Every drummer wants to play like Steve Gadd because he plays great. He plays everything well. He could very well go on to become one of the greatest drummers the world has ever seen."
As you can imagine, between his touring and recording, Steve's not the easiest guy in the world to pin down.
But he did stop for a breather the other day and we got a chance to talk with him.

Steve Gadd, one of the world's most innovative musicians, has paved the way toward new playing techniques for today's drummers.

On Practice. "I've been playing since I was a kid. As long as I keep my muscles loose, I don't have to practice a lot every day. When I do practice, I just sort of let things happen naturally and then later on try to work it into my playing. Like on '50 Ways to Leave Your Lover... I used my left hand on the high hat for the whole section – it was a little thing I'd been practicing and it just worked out."

On Control. "Sometimes I use light, medium and heavy sticks to do the same drills because the sticks affect my muscles in different ways. You have to use your hand and arm muscles differently to control your playing. It's a subtle thing but it helps me tremendously."

On Effects. "After I graduated from Eastman, I played in a rock 'n roll band. It was keyboard, bass, drums and a lot of homemade stuff. I bought 6 big artillery shells, sawed them into different lengths and hung them on a rack that I built. I'd use them for the free sections in the music."

On K's. "Art Blakey gave me my first set of K. Zildjian's a long time ago. I love the feel of them. There's something about the way the stick reacts to the surface...it almost becomes part of the cymbal. They're not cold or edgy. They have a very warm and deep feeling. They've got real character. I use a 20" Ride and an 18" Crash Ride with 14" Hi Hats for recording and live sessions."

On A's. "I love to use A. Zildjian's when I play rock 'n roll. When I want to play louder, I add a 16" Thin Crash and an 18" Crash Ride for a full crash sound. The bells on the A's really project the sound in a clear natural tone."

On Zildjian. "Zildjian to me is the foundation. I play Zildjians because that's what's in my heart. I love the sound, the feel, the history...I love the quality and the status of a Zildjian."

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